You've Got Pictures!

AOL's Guide to Digital Imaging

- How to Add Photos to Email
- Send Electronic Postcards
- Create an Online Photo Album
- Make Your Own Web Page
- Share Your Memories Online

AMERICA Online.

Edited by Seth Godin

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AOL'S GUIDE TO DIGITAL IMAGING

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The figures in this book were created for the sole purpose of demonstrating the capabilities of digital imaging software. Some contain fictitious content and may include photographs posted on the AOL service by its members. No figure in the book may be reproduced or altered in any manner.

GREETINGS FROM AMERICA ONLINE!

Welcome to AOL Press, creator of official, authoritative guides straight from America Online. Each book is written just for you, our members.

With so many books published every year, especially about online stuff, you may be wondering what makes an AOL Press book different.

Glad you asked.

We develop and write AOL Press books with our members' needs in mind—always. To develop these books, we consulted with you at every step. First, we asked you just which topics you'd like to see AOL cover. We then made sure we included the information you wanted, in a friendly way. That means jargon-free and emphasizing the practical.

We also remembered that you're online not only to get things done, but also to have some fun along the way.

This book will open a new world to you—the world of computer pictures. You'll learn how it's now as easy to send pictures online as it is to send words. We hope you have as much fun exploring this book, as we did creating it.

See you online,

Brad Schepp
Editorial Director
America Online

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS, RIGHT?

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HOW DO I GET MY PICTURES IN THERE?

There's no big mystery to getting your favorite pictures online. And the sooner you figure out how to do it, the sooner you can start enjoying the creativity and fun digital imaging has to offer. Let's begin by introducing you to the ways you can get your pictures in there, and the different digital picture file formats you might come across.

Getting Digital Pictures

First things first. You already have hundreds of downloadable images online right now: clip art, nature images, cartoons, and more, and you can scan them. It's also easy *and* inexpensive to convert your own rolls of film and existing photographs into digital pictures at a film lab, or take them with a digital camera or on your video camera. Here's how:

Download Them

To find images that can be downloaded (downloadable images), go to picture areas like the Photography Forum (keyword: **Photography Forum**), the Image Exchange (keyword: **Imageex**), and Pictures (keyword: **Pictures**). We'll cover others at the end of chapter 2. Or you can visit your favorite AOL forums and channels like Entertainment, Travel, and Sports. You'll find plenty of digital pictures in your areas of interest.

Take Them to a Digital Lab

Most film labs can put the pictures on your rolls of film or negatives on a floppy disk or photo CD-ROM. This takes about the same amount of time and costs about the same amount of money as developing prints. Simply check off the photo CD option when you fill out the form. When the pictures are ready, slip the disk into your computer and launch the Picture Gallery on the AOL service. From there, you can view and save photos to your hard drive, convert them, and work with them.

Scan Them

You can also scan existing photographs and artwork, or have them scanned for you and saved onto a disk. A scanner is a device that copies your pictures into a computer. Maybe you know someone with access to one (they can start under $100). If not, take your artwork to a copy shop that offers graphics services, like Kinko's, and have them scan it for you and give you the file on a disk.

A copy shop should be able to scan an image for you within 24 hours for under $15. That's sort of expensive, but it might be worthwhile for special objects, like your college diploma or your watercolor collection. If you didn't take the photograph or create the artwork yourself, most copy shops also require a signed permission form from the photographer or artist. Check around and see if a photo processing lab can scan your prints for less. Some charge only $3 to $10 per print, plus a charge for the disk, while others might charge a flat fee of around $25 for 24 exposures.

Use a Digital Camera

You can also try using a digital camera. It's fun, convenient, and way more affordable than it used to be. With a digital camera, you can take photos the same as you would with a regular camera, but without film. It records the images automatically into a digital format. You can then load the files from the digital camera straight into your computer. Like regular cameras, digital cameras only let you take a certain number of pictures before you have to unload the "film." When the digital camera is full, you simply plug it into the serial port on

QUESTIONS TO ASK PHOTO DEVELOPING LABS

- Can you convert photos or film to digital format?
- What digital format do you use?
- Can you format files as GIFs or JPEGs?
- How much does it cost to copy my files to disks?
- How many pictures can you fit on a disk?
- How much does it cost to convert my files to CDs?
- How many rolls of film can you fit on a CD?
- How long does it take?
- Can I get a rush order and what is the extra cost?
- Can I use the same CD later to add more images?
- Do you convert images in-house or do you send the pictures or roll of film out?
- Do you guarantee your services?
- Can I furnish my own blank disks or CDs?

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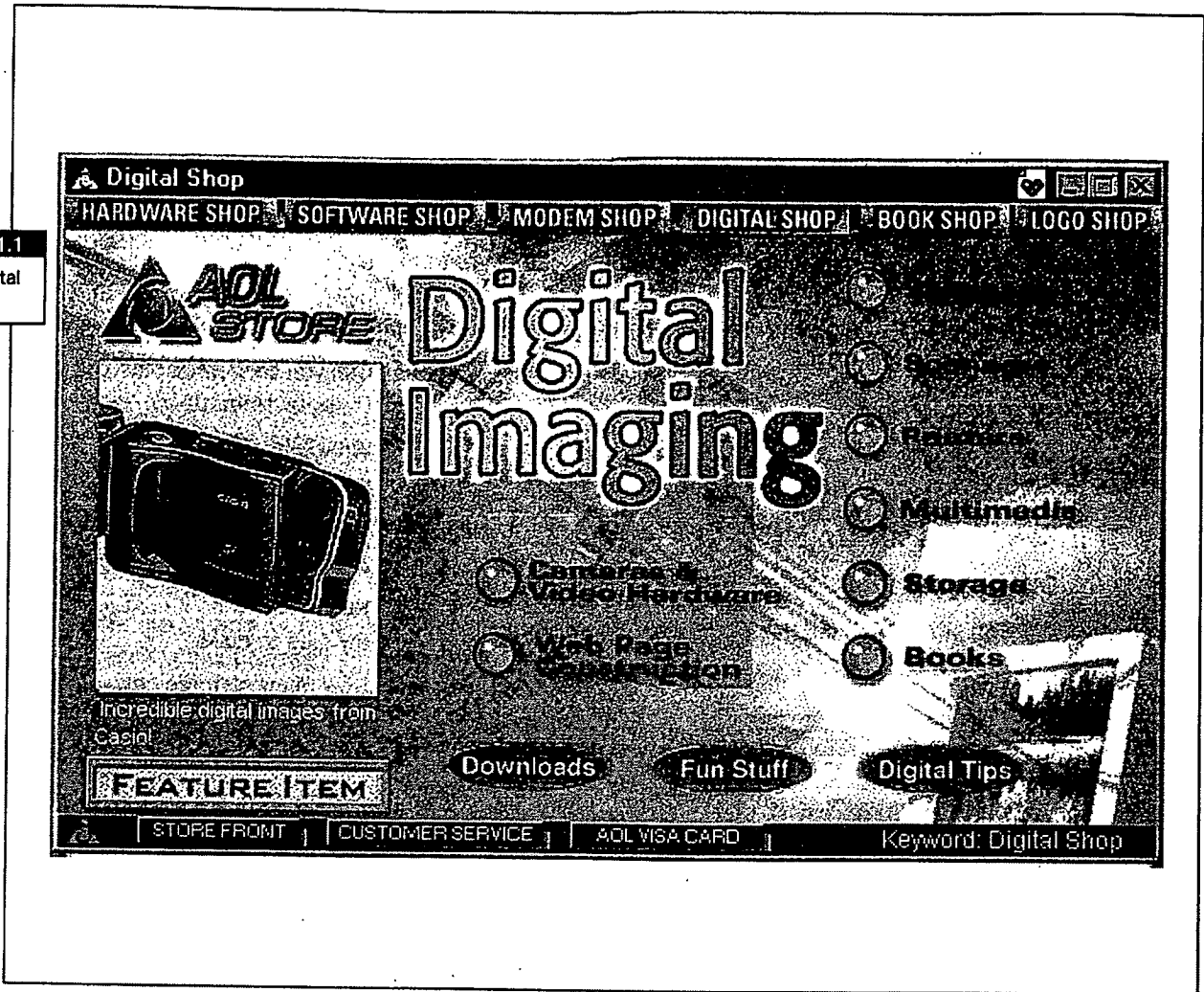
your computer. Fortunately, it only takes a few minutes to load the images onto your computer and then you can start all over again.

Imagine never having to pay to develop a roll of film again! Chapters 10 and 12 help you select a digital camera and use it to take quality digital pictures. You can also find great deals through the AOL Store's Digital Shop (figure 1.1) from vendors such as Casio and Minolta.

Use Your Video Camera

Do you have a video camera? Do you know you can use it to take digital pictures? Professionals use an expensive video card and software. If you're like the rest of us, you will do just fine using Play Incorporated's Snappy, a nifty piece of hardware selling for about $200. Simply attach one end to your printer port and the other end to your video camera, VCR, or television. It displays frames from your videos so you can select the good ones and save them as digital pictures. You can have a blast cre-

ating a show for your family and friends: wedding scenes, reunions, whitewater rafting adventures. Find out more about cameras and accessories at the Digital Shop (keyword: **Digital Shop**) under Cameras & Video Hardware. Stop by to check out digital video cameras that plug right into your computer, from vendors such as Casio, Minolta, and Kodak.

Digital Picture File Formats

You'll get the best results if you understand a thing or two about file formats. Don't be scared off by the technical-sounding names. All you need to know is that digital pictures are like ordinary photographs and graphics—only you have to either create them on a computer or convert them to a format that the computer can read. Digital pictures come in several different file formats—which are indicated by a filename

Kitten in the Hat [1kitzoom.jpg]
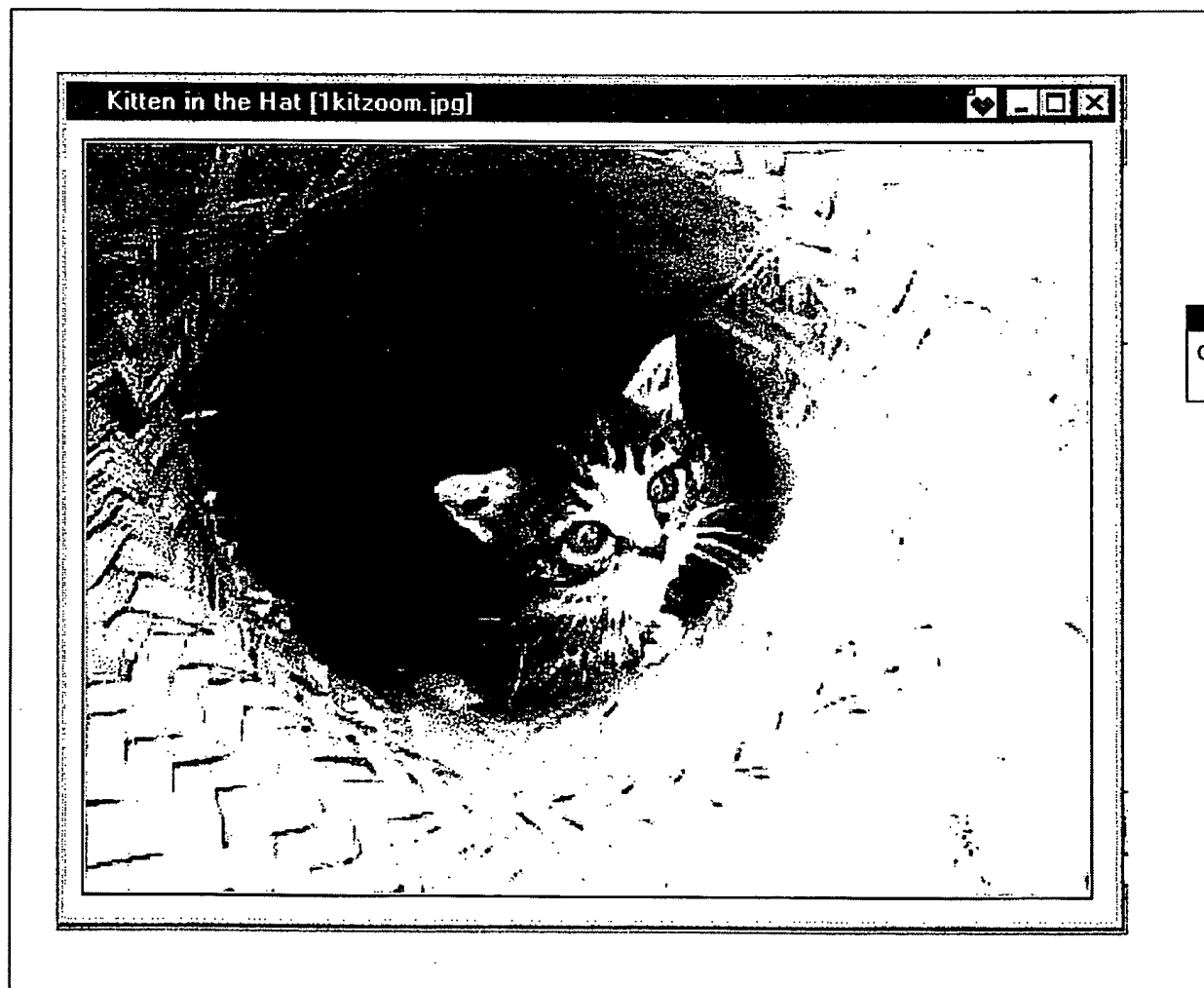
FIGURE 1.2

Continuous tone photograph

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FIGURE 1.3
Artwork with solid colors
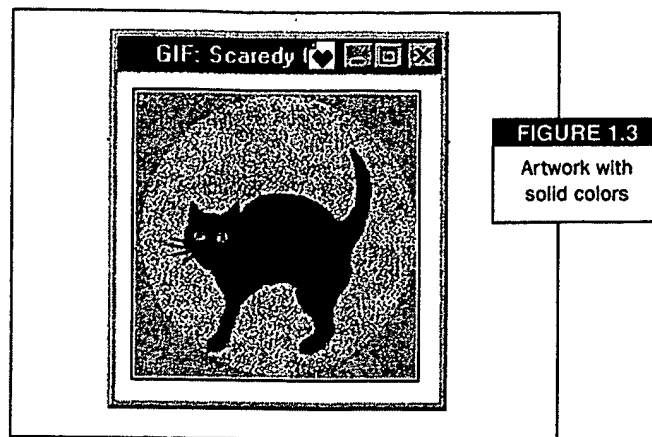
extension (such as GIF, JPEG, or BMP). Filename extensions tell your computer what application to launch the file with and indicate the format in which the picture was saved. All these filename extensions may look like alphabet soup, but you will get to know their differences and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Digital pictures come in the following flavors:

- JPEG: Small file sizes, high image quality, and short download times have made JPEGs (pronounced jay-peg) popular both on and off the Web. The JPEG file format is ideal for detailed, continuous tone photographs like the one shown in figure 1.2. JPEG files work well online because anyone can view them with a Web browser. (JPEG stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group, the organization that developed this file format.)

- GIF: The GIF file format enjoys many of the JPEG's advantages. However, it lends itself better to artwork with solid colors, like the drawing shown in figure 1.3, than to photographs. You can also do neat things with GIFs—like assemble a few of them into animations, or eliminate the background color to make them blend seamlessly with a Web page. (GIF stands for Graphic Interchange Format. People used this file format to share digital pictures on online services before the Web existed.)

- BMP: Windows users often exchange BMP files because Microsoft Windows' built-in Paint program can open them. In addition, most applications can handle the BMP (bitmap) file format, which works well for photographs.

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- Other image formats: In addition to the common file formats listed above, you might run into digital pictures created in popular graphics applications or those used by graphics professionals. These include TIF, EPS, PCX, PCT, and WMF files, which you can learn about in the many graphics forums on the AOL service. You can open many different picture file formats in AOL 4.0. Simply select File, Open from the task bar at the top of the screen.

When to Use Which File Format

Now that you know about all the various digital picture formats, how do you figure out when to use what? You can convert and save to different graphic file formats with the Picture Gallery. Which image file format you choose depends on how you plan to use your digital pictures. Keep in mind that you can convert high-density images to low-density, but not vice versa.

The following list tells you what digital picture file formats work best for which purpose:

- GIF and JPEG: In most cases, you can't go wrong with GIFs and JPEGs. Use them for your Web page or any online communications. Web browsers only support the GIF and JPEG formats. Files saved in these formats also transfer quickly when e-mailing or uploading. But keep in mind that many applications—such as word processing, page layout, spreadsheet, and presentation programs—can't handle GIFs and JPEGs. (AOL 4.0 *can*.)
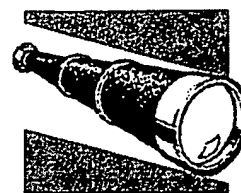
WHICH IS BETTER, GIF OR JPEG?

GIF and JPEG are popular because most Web browsers support them. But when do you use a GIF and when do you use a JPEG? The following lists can help you determine how to format your digital pictures:

GIF	JPEG
Line art	Scanned photos
Cartoons	Full-color images
Bold colors	Photo-realistic images
Icons	Gray-scale images
Bold lines	Complex color gradients
Large areas of solid color	Detailed shading

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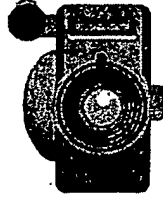
USES FOR DIGITAL PICTURES

You probably already have lots of ideas about how to use your digital pictures. But here are a few that you may not have thought of yet. Throughout this book you'll find more.

- Illustrate flyers and brochures.

- Personalize letters and e-mail.

- Create multimedia slide shows.

- Publish an online newsletter.

- Create a Web page.

- Spruce up school reports and assignments.

- Illustrate a family tree.

- Assemble an online photo album.

- Create an illustrated calendar.

FIGURE 1.4

PC Graphic Arts Forum

PC Graphic Arts Forum

PC Graphic Arts Forum Information
- Artists' Spotlight & Picks Of The Week
- Graphic Resource Center
- Recommended Viewers
- Online Classroom
- Subscribe to The Weekly Byte -- it's free!
- Mac Graphic Arts & CAD Forum
- Search Computing

PC Graphic Conference Center
Conferences each night at 9:30 ET
Enter chat or view schedule here

ROSIE O'DONNELL
Interactive Monday
10AM ET

Message Boards

Software Libraries

PC Graphic Weblinks

Special Interest Groups

Computing SUPER STORE
Computing Superstore

Computing Classifieds

SUPPORT FORUMS | SOFTWARE SEARCH | FEEDBACK | Keyword: PGR

- BMP: Use when exchanging files with Windows users who might want to use the files in documents that were created in other applications. Just about every Windows application can handle BMPs. Many of the Macintosh applications can import BMPs too. But keep in mind: Macintosh users may not be able to look at your file before importing it into a document.

See? No more alphabet soup. Now that you know a little about file formats, you can send a cyberbouquet of roses or ogle Uncle Harry's new fireplace. You can learn even more about digital pictures and graphics terms at the PC Graphic Arts Forum (keyword: **Graphics**), as shown in figure 1.4.

So Now You've Got Your Image File

Once you have your digital pictures, the fun can really begin. E-mail them to relatives and friends, upload them to forums, use them for all kinds of creative projects, or just keep them for yourself. You can even make a slide show presentation out of them that will also work as a screen saver for your computer. The possibilities are endless.

Chapter 2 will introduce you to the Picture Gallery, AOL's built-in tool kit that gives you everything you need to store and craft your favorite pictures. And don't forget—you can *manipulate* your digital pictures. Change your eye color, crop out your blind date, even add special effects like textured backgrounds and negative images. So knock yourself out. Make your peonies look like they nabbed the blue ribbon, or draw a mustache and horns on your boss. Chapter 11 discusses imaging and graphics software further, so you can put what's in your head on your screen.

AOL Channels and forums give you just about everything you need to become a digital picture whiz. Visit the Pictures area (keyword: **Pictures**) of the Interests channel for ideas and tips. You can even enter a digital picture contest! It's time to get rolling with all those pictures.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS FOR AOL 4.0

Windows 95 and Windows 98

- 16 megabytes RAM system configuration
- Pentium-class PC
- 45 megabytes available hard disk space
- 640 x 480, 256 colors screen resolution, or better
- 14.4 Kbps modem, or faster

Windows 3.1

- 16 megabytes RAM system configuration
- 486-class PC, or better
- 30 megabytes available hard disk space
- 640 x 480, 256 colors screen resolution, or better
- 14.4 Kbps modem, or faster

Macintosh

- 12 megabytes RAM system configuration
- System 7.1, or better
- 68040 or PowerPC Macintosh
- 640 x 480, 256 colors display, or better
- 14.4 Kbps modem, or faster

If you need to upgrade any system components, be sure to visit AOL's Hardware Shop at keyword **Hardware Center**. (See the Upgrade Tips section.) Users with Windows 95 machines that don't meet the AOL 4.0 for Windows 95 requirements can use the 16-bit version (the version which is normally used on Windows 3.1).

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2
SHARING PICTURES WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND ONLINE PALS

ere's the part you've been waiting for: how to play around with pictures and special backgrounds in your e-mail, Instant Messages, online postcards, and Address Book. You're going to love the Picture Gallery, which is built into AOL 4.0; it makes viewing, editing, and swapping pictures on the AOL service easier than flipping through a photo album. We'll also show you how to add to your collection with the large and varied assortment of pictures you can download. Finally, we'll help you put together a simple multimedia presentation that documents your newborn's coming home from the hospital, for example.

FIGURE 2.1

Select Open
Picture Gallery

Using the Picture Gallery

The Picture Gallery is your premier tool for managing and manipulating digital pictures. You can use the directory feature to find and organize picture files on your hard drive or disk, use the thumbnail feature to preview miniature versions of your pictures, use the toolbar to change the full-size version of the picture and place it right in an e-mail message or other document.

To launch the Picture Gallery:

1. Select Open Picture Gallery from the File menu (see figure 2.1). You'll see the Open Picture Gallery dialogue box (see figure 2.2).

2. Browse for the directory folder, disk, or CD-ROM that contains your digital picture files.

3. Select the file and click on Open Gallery. The Picture Gallery dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 2.3. You can either place the image in a file or e-mail, or view and edit it using the toolbar buttons.

Open Picture Gallery

Select any folder that contains image files and click Open Gallery

Directories:

c:\

- c:\
- America Online 4.0
- America Online 4.0
- America Online 4.0
- aol30
- bowker

Files:

- books.jpg
- nb_img1.gif
- nb_img2.gif
- nb_img3.gif
- nb_img4.gif
- nb_img5.gif
- nb_img6.gif
- nlsopal.bmp

Drives:

c: yoyopc2

List of Image Disk Types:

All Images
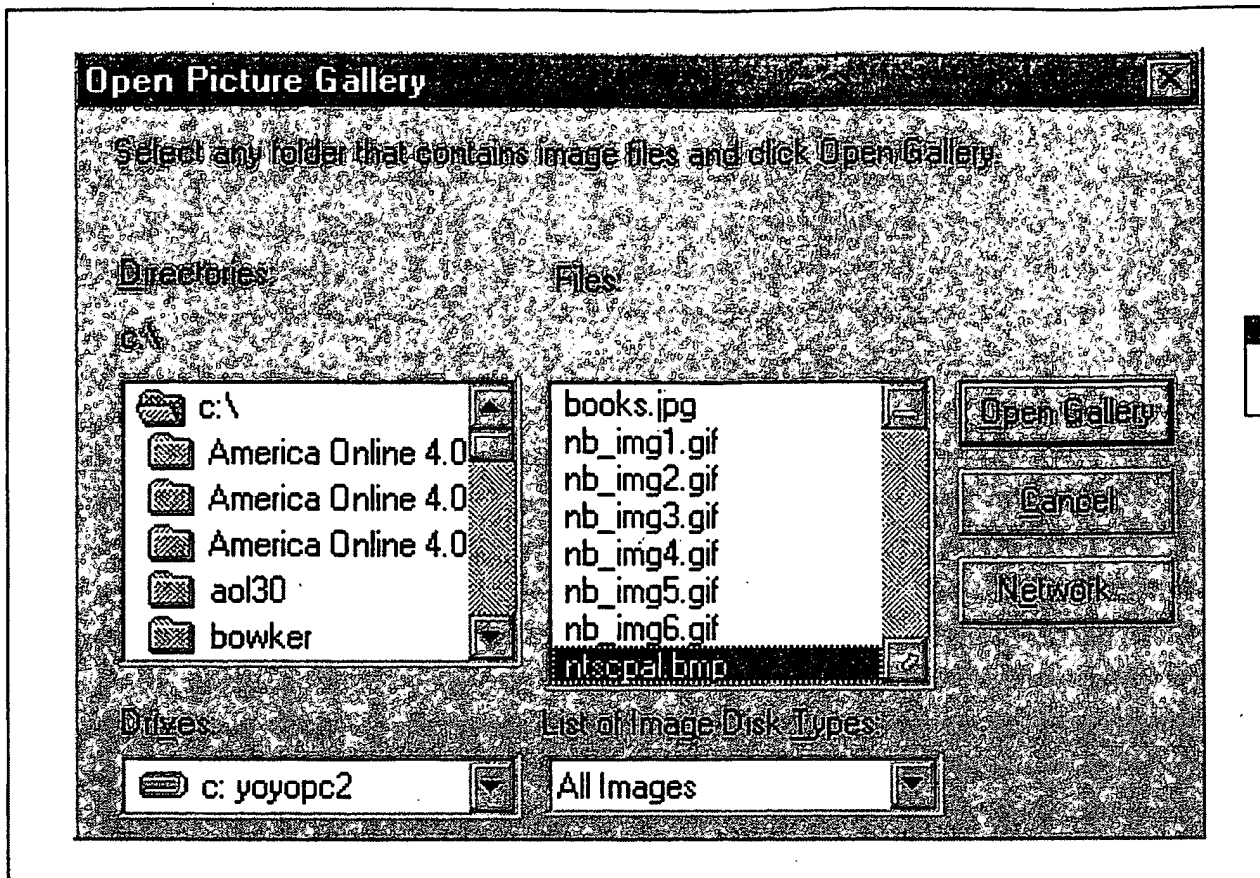
Open Gallery
Cancel
Network...

See how easy it is? The Picture Gallery dialogue box displays miniature versions of
your pictures, called "thumbnails." It can show six pictures at a time. Click on Next
to view more.

Placing Pictures in Messages and Files

The Picture Gallery dialogue box makes it easy to place your 25th anniversary party
photo into an e-mail or special picture file. But before you do, remember the dis-
cussion on file formats in chapter 1. You may want to open your picture first and
save it to an appropriate file format. The next section, "Touching Up, Saving, and
Converting Picture Files," tells you how.

To place your picture into a message or file:

1. Open a document or create a new message, then display the Picture
    Gallery dialogue box.

2. Click on the photo and drag the image into your message or file.

Picture Gallery

To send a picture, click and drag it into an e-mail.
To open a picture or make changes to it, click on it.

1　　　　　　**2**　　　　　　**3**

closet.jpg　　　babyface.jpg　　　faceball.jpg

3 Total

22
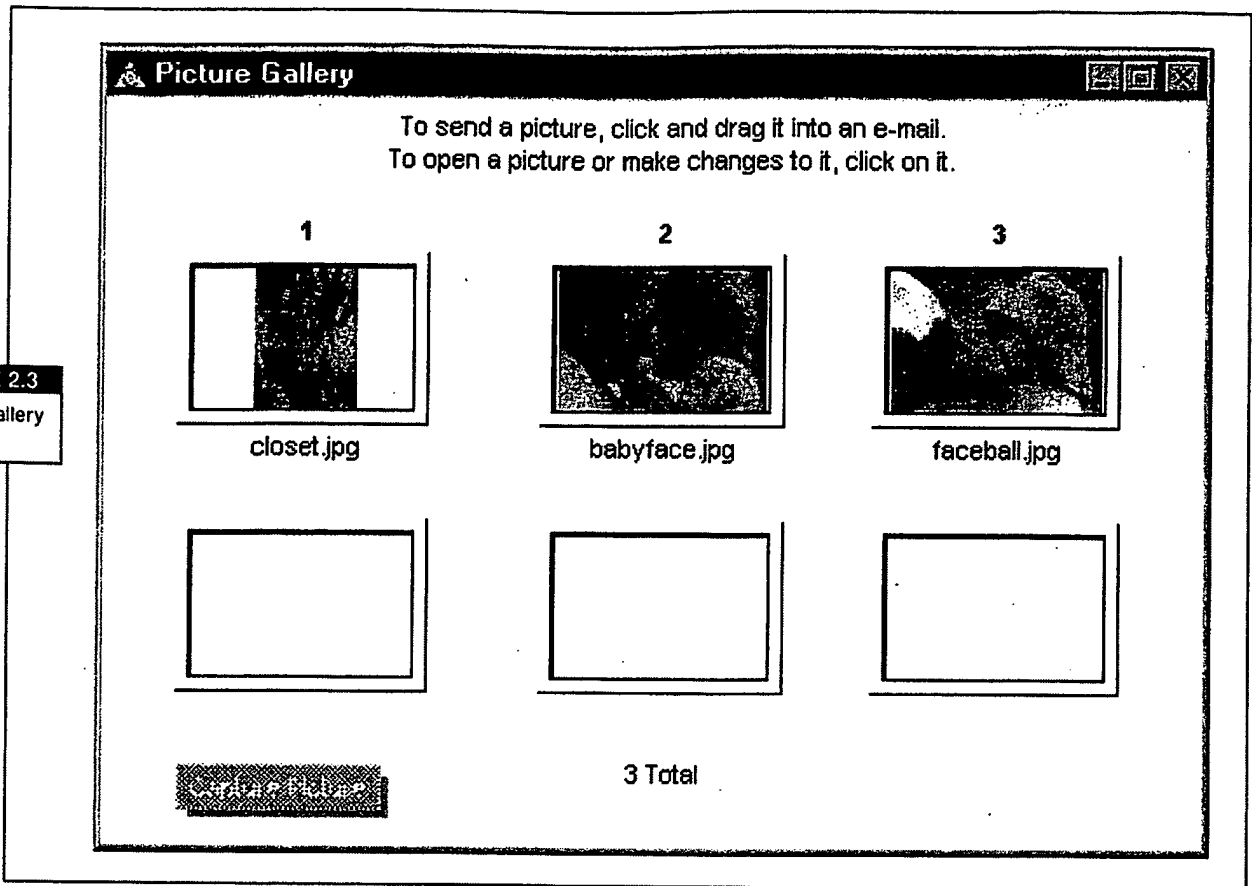
Touching Up, Saving, and Converting Picture Files

The Picture Gallery also provides you with an image editing window, as shown in figure 2.4. The image editing window displays your image at actual size and includes tools for retouching. For example, you can crop the 25th anniversary picture to eliminate the caterer's elbow and rotate it on an angle for a more interesting layout. This section explains the image editing window tools, and tells you how to save and convert your images.

You can also convert images to different file formats. But remember that images with fewer colors, higher compression levels, and lower resolutions do not convert successfully to image formats with more colors, lower compression levels, or higher resolutions. For example, you gain nothing from converting a GIF into a JPEG, though some JPEGs can work well as GIFs. The GIF format only supports 256 colors, while the JPEG format supports millions of colors.

To display an image in the image editing window:

1. Display your thumbnails in the Picture Gallery dialogue box.
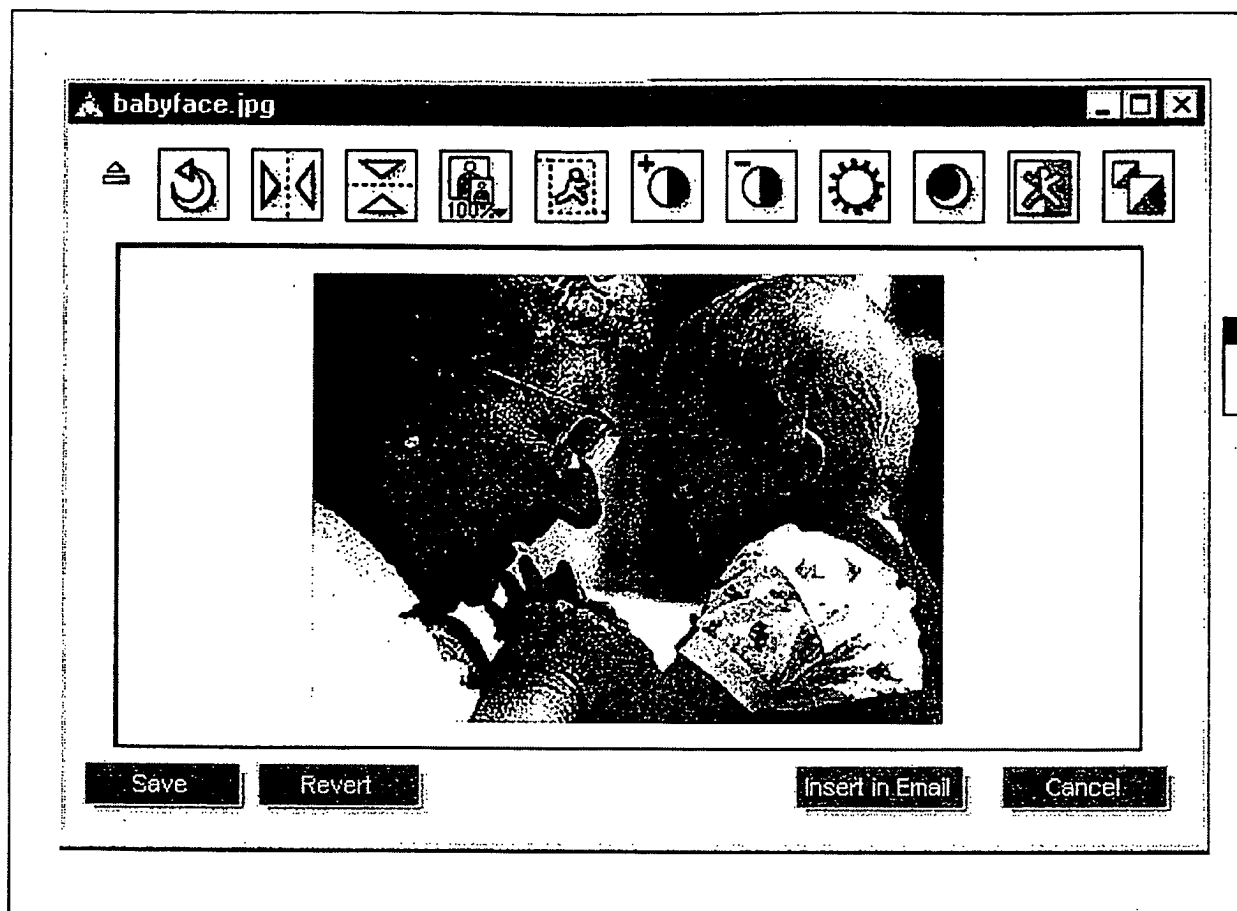
FIGURE 2.4
Picture Gallery editing window

2. Select the picture you want to edit by clicking on it.

3. Begin touching it up.

You can click on different toolbar buttons to edit your digital pictures. The toolbar buttons are located at the top of the image editing window below the title bar. If you need to be reminded what each button does, simply glide your cursor over it to see a brief pop-up description. If you can't find the toolbar buttons, click on the down arrow to reveal them.

- **Rotate Picture.** Rotates the picture in 90 degree increments so you can make jazzy layouts.

- **Flip Picture Horizontally.** Flips the picture backwards along the Y axis (left or right).

- **Flip Picture Vertically.** Flips the picture upside down along the X axis (top or bottom).

- **Zoom In/Out.** Expands the picture to fit within the viewing format. This may distort your image.

- **Cropping.** Crops your picture to a defined area, to eliminate part of the image. To define your cropping area, place your cursor on the image, then drag it diagonally to create a square or rectangle. For this icon to work, you must first select the area you want to crop. Say the choicest picture from the anniversary party is marred by the presence of your ubiquitous caterer. Place your cursor on the picture and, with the left mouse button held down, drag a box around the part of the image you want to keep. Everything *outside* that box, including the chief cook, will bite the dust.

- **Increase Picture Contrast.** Intensifies your picture's light and dark areas. This can add more definition to photographs that look washed out or too dark. Don't lose the detail on that beautiful cake.

- **Decrease Picture Contrast.** Decreases contrast between the picture's light and dark areas. This can help smooth the edges and eliminate unwanted details. (Do you really want everyone to see that blemish you got right before the party?)

- **Brighten Picture.** Brightens a picture that looks too dark.

- **Dim Picture.** Darkens a picture that looks too light.

- **Invert Picture.** Creates a "negative" of the current picture. This reverses all of the colors as well as the light and dark areas. You can use these negative images to add interesting effects to your layouts.

- **Convert Picture to Grayscale.** Makes a color image look like a black-and-white photograph. Turning a picture into a grayscale image can reduce its file size, and shows you how the image would look when printed on a black-and-white printer. Grayscale can also give your pictures an interesting "old-fashioned" look.

The image editing window also has a button bar below the picture for additional tasks:

- **Save.** Saves the image.

- **Revert.** Reverts to the last version of the image saved and eliminates all edits made up to that point. When experimenting, the Revert button is your friend.

- **Insert in E-mail.** Inserts the current image in the currently open e-mail message.

- **Cancel.** Cancels the last change made or gives you the option to save it and then returns you to the Picture Gallery. To save your changes:

  1. Select Save As from the File menu. The Save Graphic As dialogue box will appear.

  2. Select a folder from the Save In: list.

  3. Enter a name for your file in the File name: text field.

  4. Use the File Types list to select the format if you want to convert your file. For more about file formats, see chapter 1.

  5. Click on Save.

Jazzing Up E-Mail Messages

Sure, you can use the Picture Gallery's Insert in E-mail feature to do just that. But it is just as easy to start from the Write Mail screen (click on Write on the AOL toolbar or enter Control-M), where you can add snazzy backgrounds or embed pictures

IMAGE AND BACKGROUND TIPS FOR E-MAIL

Have fun using pictures and images in your e-mail messages. Follow these tips to get the best results:

- **Choose appropriate background and text colors.** Business messages should look professional and low-key. You can use more casual color schemes with friends and family.

- **Watch your colors.** Use light-colored text on dark-colored backgrounds and vice versa. Otherwise, people may have trouble reading your messages.

- **Watch your file sizes.** Embedded and background images increase your e-mail message's file size, and can slow down your transmission time.

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FIGURE 2.5
Write Mail
screen
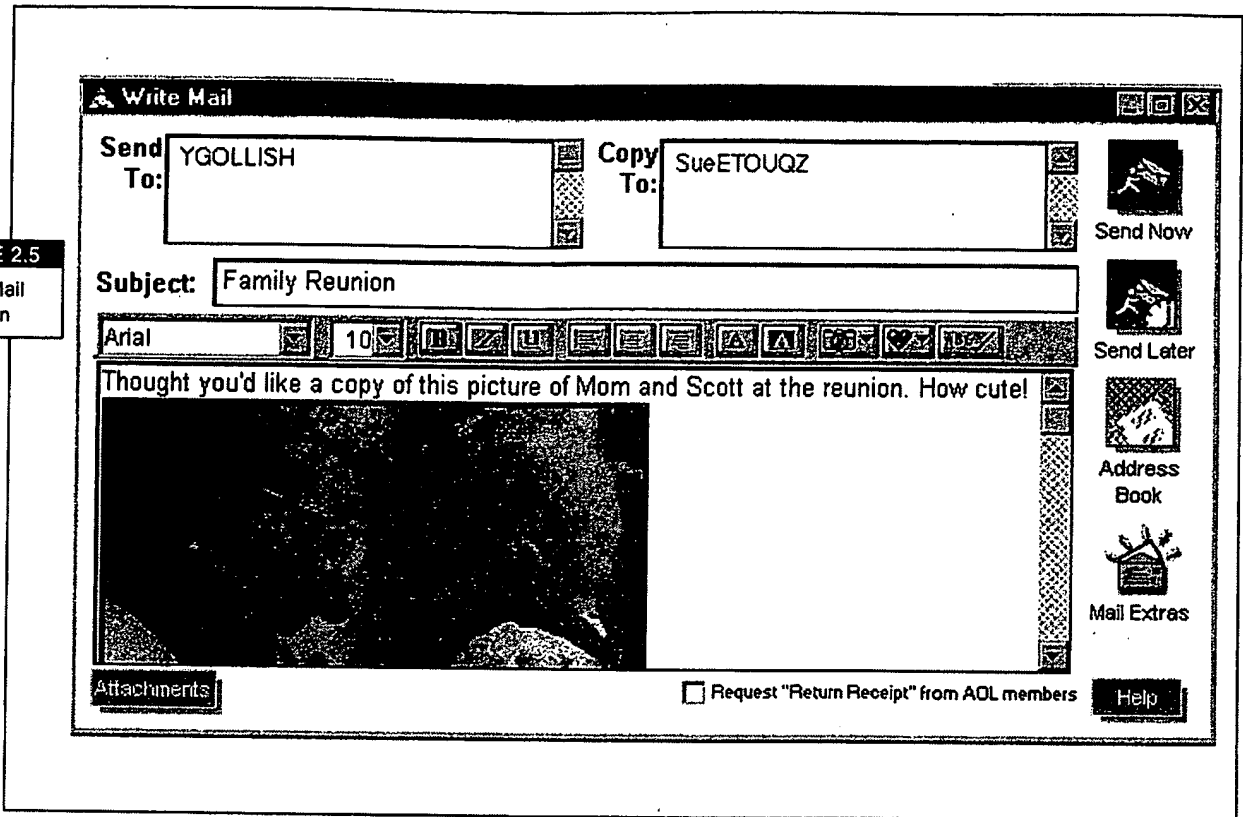
right in the message (instead of using an attachment), as shown in figure 2.5. This is a great way to share pictures with other AOL members—although your friends on the Internet may not be able to see them.

Right Click with your mouse where you want to insert a digital picture. When the pop-up menu appears, select the Insert a Picture option. When the Open dialogue box appears, you can browse for the picture you want and select it. That's it.

To add a patterned image to the background of your e-mail message:

1. Place your cursor anywhere in your e-mail message and click on it with the right mouse button.

2. When the pop-up menu appears, click on the Background Picture option. The Open dialogue box will appear.

3. Browse for a background image, then click on Open.

Hint: Image backgrounds work best when you use subtle patterns with low contrast levels. You don't want your friends to have to squint and sweat trying to read your black letters against a fuchsia background.

To add a solid-colored background to an e-mail message:
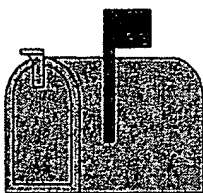
1. Place your cursor anywhere in your e-mail message and click on it with the right mouse button.

2. When the pop-up menu appears, click on the Background Color option with the right mouse button. The color palette dialogue box will appear.

TIPS FOR SENDING AND RECEIVING FILES

The most common way to send a file is as an attachment via e-mail. Now, with AOL's version 4.0, you can send digital pictures through e-mail.

When you're sending and receiving files online, there are a few things you need to keep in mind:

1. When sending documents of any type it is better to send a text-only file. These files are often referred to as ASCII files. They are straight text files with no fancy printer codes, no special formatting. These files can be read by any computer and any word processing program. They can also be read by cross-platform computers, which means that if you're on a PC and send to someone on a Mac, that person can still read your file.

2. Size becomes very important when you're sending or receiving files. Bigger is not better in this instance. When at all possible, compress large files. Note that AOL 4.0 will compress multiple attached files when you send a message. If you don't already have a program to zip and unzip files, you should get one. (One of the most popular and best programs is called WinZip.) For more information about working within compressed files on the AOL service, go to Member Services (keyword: **Member Services**).

3. Never accept files from someone you don't know. A nasty virus could take down your computer. Or you could get a picture you'd rather not see or rather not have your children see.

4. Never send attachments to e-mail lists. Some people are billed by the size of the files they receive and won't appreciate your sending them an unsolicited attachment. Some people just prefer not to receive unasked-for files from others. Some don't know how to (or can't) open attachments. To these people, your attachment is not only unwanted but useless. Lastly, not everyone uses the same type of computer—some are on Macs and some are on PCs—nor do they all have the same operating systems or the same programs. Your attachment will be nothing but a nuisance in such cases.

5. Your modem's speed makes all the difference in the world—especially when it comes to sending and receiving images. So consider upgrading, if you are not already using a 56 Kbps modem. The Modem Shop, part of the AOL Store (keyword: **Modem Shop** or **AOL Store**) includes a great selection of modems from top vendors including U.S. Robotics.

3. Pick your favorite among the variety of colors, click on it, then click on the OK button.

AOL Online Greetings

What's a long-distance relationship without postcards? That's what we thought. You'll be happy to know that Online Greetings (keyword: **Online Greetings**) offers a great assortment of ready-made pictures to choose from, like the one in figure 2.6. A package of ten cards will cost you about five dollars. Once you purchase them, you must use them within 90 days. AOL reminds you every time you send one, and tells you how many you have left. They'll also give a holler as the expiration date approaches. The Online Greetings area also offers Slideshow Greetings and animated greetings.

To purchase your greetings:

1. Browse the categories and greetings.

2. Select the greeting by doubleclicking on it

FIGURE 2.6

A digital postcard
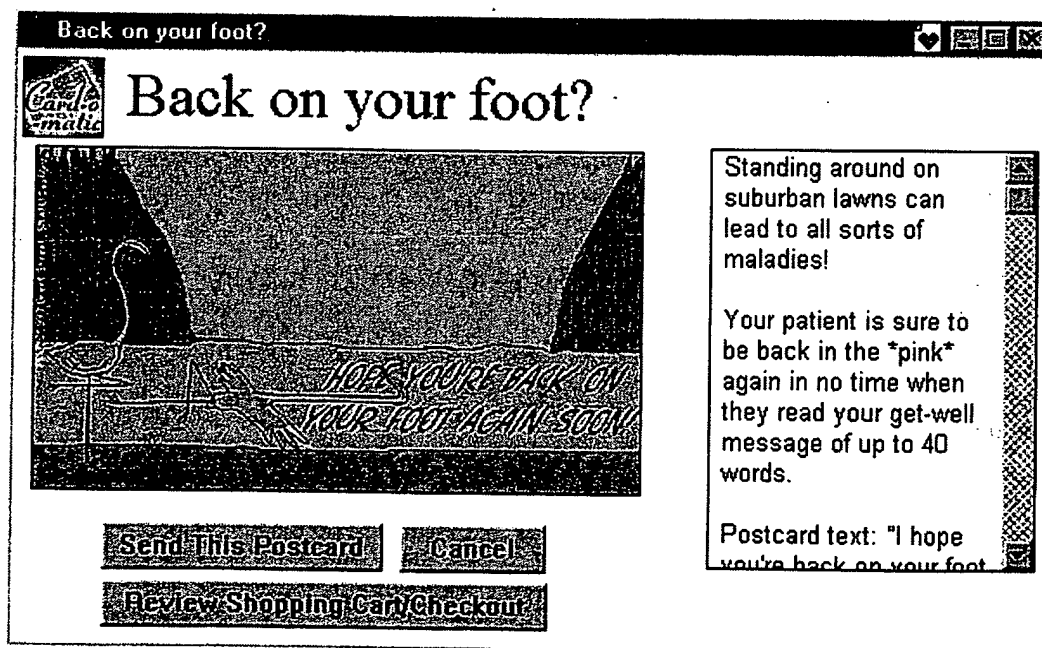
3. Type the screen name or e-mail address, subject line, and message.

4. Click on Send.

5. Enter credit card information, as requested, and click on OK.

When your friends send you greetings, why not save them to a file in the Picture Gallery so you can create a personalized collection? You could use them to eventually put together a "through the years" scrapbook. Or reuse the images in some of your special projects in part II of this book. Make your own tradition.

Adding Pictures to Your Address Book

Are you wondering what your new online buddy, SueETOUQZ looks like? Ask her to send you a picture, and save it to your Address Book which you can get to from the Mail Center icon on the AOL toolbar (keyword: **Mail**).
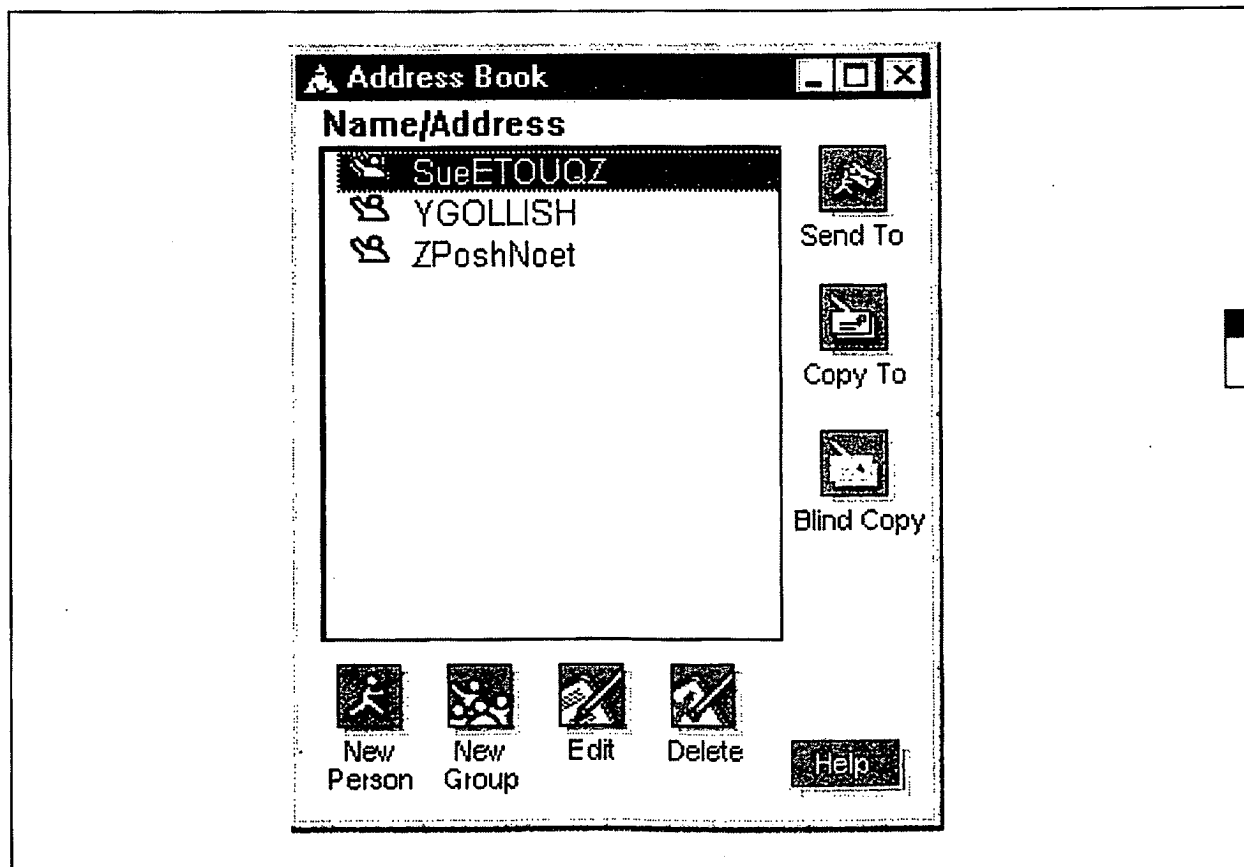
FIGURE 2.7
Address Book

FIGURE 2.8
Picture box

30
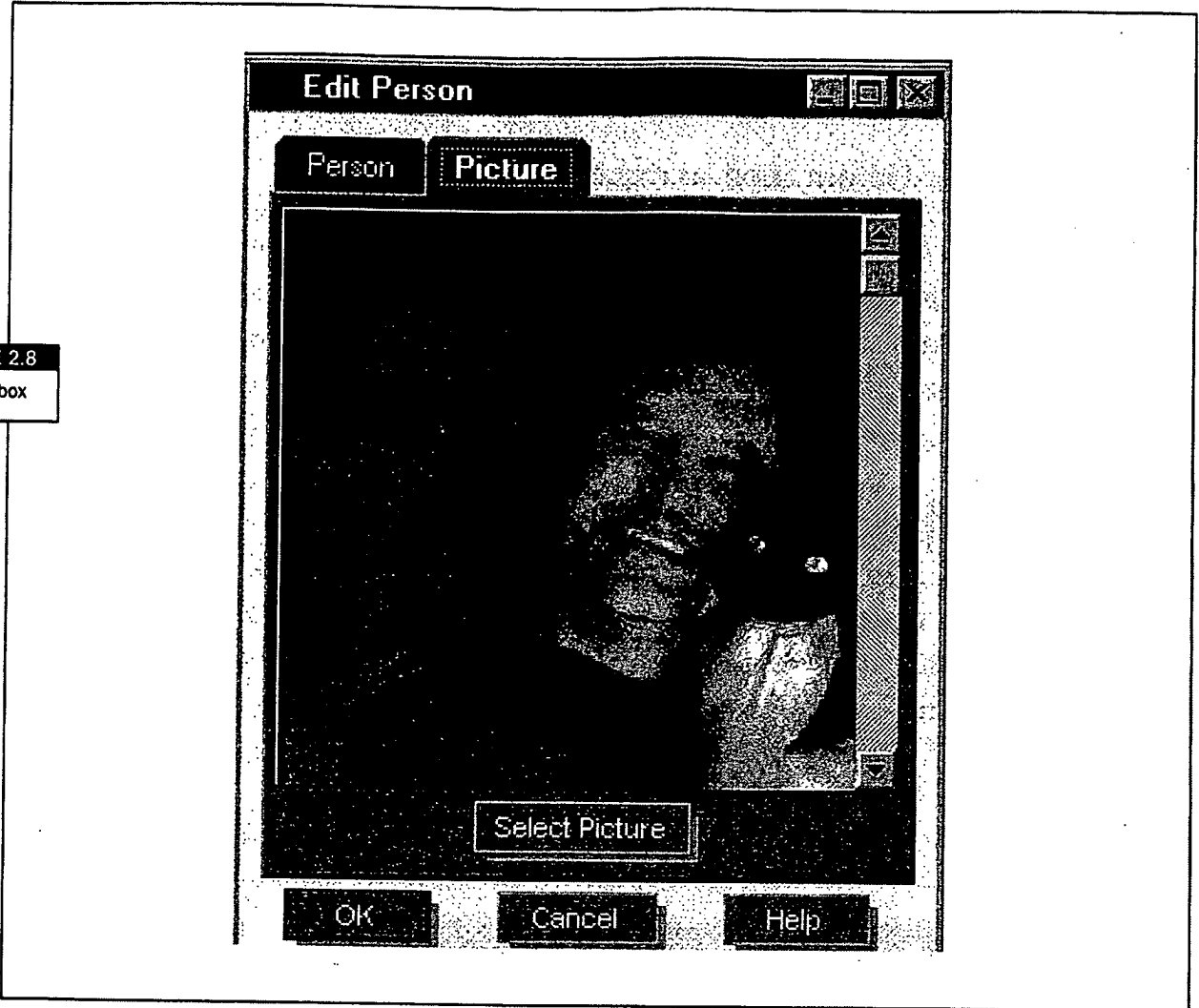
To add a picture to go with a contact's name in your Address Book:

1. Go to the Mail Center (keyword: **Mail**) and select the Address Book from the Mail menu. You'll see the Address Book window, as shown in figure 2.7.

2. Select a screen name from your list of buddies and click on Edit.

3. When the Edit Person dialogue box appears, click on the Picture tab. You will get the Picture box, as shown in figure 2.8.

4. Click on the Select Picture button and select the picture file from your directory.

5. If you want, click on the Person tab to update the profile information, or click on OK.

You can also add new contacts by clicking on New Person and entering the information when the New Person dialogue box appears.

AOL Picture Libraries

Supplement your own digital picture library with images already online. Most AOL forums have areas for downloading and posting files—including pictures—so members can exchange information and get to know each other better. Insiders know where to go for the prime pickings. Try these:

The Gallery

Start your search for digital pictures with a visit to the AOL Portrait Gallery (keyword: **Gallery**). The Gallery has various areas for downloading, viewing, and posting pictures. You can browse the AOL Member Portrait Gallery for pictures of your online buddies and add a picture of yourself, or visit the Rogue Gallery and see what your hosts at AOL look like. The Family Album features pictures of AOL members with—you guessed it—their families, and also encourages members to post. To submit pictures to the AOL Member Portrait Gallery or the Family Album, just follow the instructions posted in the Gallery area (in the Frequently Asked Questions area).

But you can do a lot more than just take a gander at your friends. Try some of these activities:

- Make a photo album: Have you made new friends in the chat groups you frequent? Make a photo album of all the people in a chat group, upload it to the forum's posting area, and invite everyone to take a look at it.

- Publish a book: Create a booklet of useful things you've learned in your favorite forums for other members to use as a reference. Give forum members credit for the information they've provided and include their photographs.

- Add pictures to your Web site: Create a Web page with photographs of your favorite AOL friends (make sure you get their permission). Add links to their Web pages. Chapter 7 gives more details about setting up a Web page.

HOW DIGITAL PICTURES CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS

Sure, you can have fun with digital pictures. But they're more than a toy. Digital pictures can also help you generate customers for your small business. Begin by using digital pictures in simple ways that don't require a lot of time and effort. As you grow more comfortable with them, digital pictures can also become part of your long-term projects.

Digital pictures can help your business in the following ways:

- **Personalize your communications.** You can send messages including your logo and contact information—think of it as your online letterhead. Or you can send personalized postcards and messages to clients for holidays, to acknowledge important events in their lives, to wish them well, and to make announcements.

- **Keep track of contacts.** Your Address Book helps you keep track of clients, colleagues, and that new contact you made at a conference last week. You can place a photograph or company logo with each person's contact information to jog your memory when you address a message to them.

- **Promote your products and services.** Build a Web page, set up a downloadable slide presentation, or create an online catalog. You can even develop an attractive online publication to keep customers up-to-date on your latest sales, celebrations, and other events. For small businesses, the AOL service and the Internet can help you reach more people for less money. (AOL's Prime Host Service provides a full-featured Web site solution, all under one storefront.) For large business, online communications make it easy to update your printed materials and tide you over until the next press run.

- **Create a company newsletter.** If you and your coworkers work from different locations, an online newsletter can build a sense of teamwork and morale. It will keep everyone up-to-date and help colleagues put faces to the people they communicate with by phone or e-mail every day. Best of all, online newsletters are cheaper than the printed kind.

- **And more...** Take pictures of your inventory and put them online (many database programs let you incorporate digital pictures) so people can track it more easily. Develop online training materials that reduce training costs and increase productivity. For example, a slide presentation or a Web page "Help" area can guide your coworkers through common tasks, like doing a mail merge.

ClickArt

Sure, "a picture is worth a thousand words." But sometimes a photograph says too *much* when you'd prefer something sleek and simple. In that case, stop by the ClickArt area (keyword: **ClickArt**). You'll find lots of sample spot illustrations—

where else can you turn when you simply must have a picture of a walrus in a top hat? — but you can also find great deals on click art collections. The collection offers a variety of styles, so it's a great place to look, whether your project or message is business-like, casual, cutting-edge, or formal. It is especially useful for:

- Online stationery and logos

- Navigation buttons on your Web pages

- Decorative art for newsletters

The Internet

To tap into the many image collections available on the Internet, click on the Internet toolbar button (the globe), and then on Go to the Web to jump to the home page of the AOL service. From there, you can enter a keyword (such as **Images** or **Gallery** in the AOL NetFind text field) and click on Find. Be smart about your search terms (be specific) to avoid an unmanageable number of hits. When the list of links appears, read the information and visit the sites that appeal to you.

Images in the Public Domain Online

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Not all the photos and images you find on the AOL service or Web sites are there for the taking. If they're copyrighted, you can't use them unless you get permission from the owner, or purchase the right to use them. Under current copyright laws, an author or artist's work is automatically copyrighted for the duration of the person's life, plus 50 years. After that, the work becomes part of the public domain.

You can use public domain pictures freely, without worrying about copyright infringement. To find public domain graphics on the Internet, use AOL NetFind to search for something like **Public Domain Photographs**. Many people also offer public domain graphics on their personal Web sites. Try the Icon Bazaar at http.//www.iconbazaar.com.

Commercial Digital Pictures

If you're looking for stock photos or a collection of related images, consider buying a CD-ROM from the ClickArt area (keyword: **ClickArt**). Once you buy a clip art or stock photography collection, you can use the images as often as you want.

Taking Stock

You've come a long way from feeling clueless about digital images. Now you know how to get them on your machine, convert them to the proper file format, and store and use them in the Picture Gallery. You created a slide show and sent pictures by e-mail and Instant Messages. Maybe you're even sending postcards regularly. But the best part about pictures is they help you be creative—and that's what you'll learn how to do next, in part II.
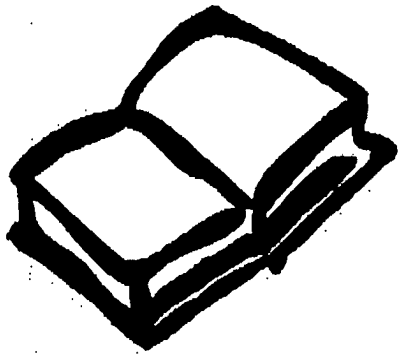
PART II

The Digital Picture Idea Book

Here comes the creative part. You've gathered all your favorite digital pictures together in the Picture Gallery, and you know how to personalize them and send them to practically anyone online. Now it's time to express your personality with pictures. Even if you feel like you've got the skill of a five-year-old with scissors and paste, you'll find the tools online that make it possible to create masterpieces you can be proud of. This section will lead you through six easy activities: creating a photo album, building a family tree, posting a personal profile to meet mates and dates, making invitations and announcements, creating a Web page,

and helping your kids get the most out of digital imaging. We'll also whet your appetite with creative suggestions for other projects, because once you get going with digital pictures you won't want to stop.

3

ALL THOSE SPECIAL MEMORIES: CREATING SIMPLE PHOTO ALBUMS AND OTHER KEEPSAKES

veryone's got a box of pictures to organize in an album "someday." Or maybe you've already discovered the pleasure of arranging your collection and dressing it up with stickers, quotations, funny quips, and scraps of your favorite treasures. This type of personalization barely touches the surface of what is possible when you create a photo album online. You already know how to enhance your pictures with cropping, touching up, and highlighting. But there is much more—your creativity in assembling and describing them is limited only by your imagination. And you never have to worry about faded, torn, or lost photos.

This chapter takes you through the process of putting together a simple album to commemorate your child's first haircut. But you can use the same skills to make greeting cards, notepads, calendars, and all kinds of other creative projects.

So let's get started. But be more creative than you might be in a standard album. Arrange the pictures in unusual configurations. Add captions and flattering backgrounds. Pick a theme you can elaborate with special fonts and add decorative touches.

Suppose you just took little Eddie for his first real haircut and brought home "before" and "after" pictures of his lustrous mop. Instead of merely placing the two pictures side by side on a page, why not set up a whole barber shop theme? Download a picture of an old-time barber's chair and crop Eddie's picture so it looks like he's sitting in it. (If you make a mistake, no big deal; just start over with a fresh backup copy of the file.) Add some clip art of a barber's pole and even put a scanned image of the newly clipped hair at the bottom. You get the idea. Suddenly you have way more than a page from a standard photo album.

It doesn't matter what theme you choose: vacation highlights, pets, college memories, even your salt and pepper shaker collection. Let's take it step by step.

Gathering Your Pictures

To begin making your digital photo album, gather together the electronic pictures you want to use. Whether they're on CD-ROMs, disks, or in the Picture Gallery, copy them into a single folder. Give the folder a name—for example, "Eddie's First Haircut." If you prefer, you can preview thumbnails of all the pictures in the Picture Gallery, then open those you want to use in the image editing window. Save them to your photo album folder.

To select images in the Picture Gallery:

1. Select Open Picture Gallery from the File menu (see figure 3.1).

2. When the Open Picture Gallery dialogue box appears, browse for the folder, disk, or CD-ROM containing the digital pictures you want (see figure 3.2).

3. When the Files list appears, click on Open Gallery. Peruse the collection, and select the best pictures for your new album.

4. Select a picture by clicking on it. The image will appear in the image editing window.

5. Click on Save As in the File menu. When the Save Graphic As dialogue box appears, browse for your folder, name the file, and click on Save again. You can also convert your image to a different file format by selecting an option from the File Type list.

6. Then click on Save.

Touching Them Up

Now that you've gathered all the best shots of your little darling with and without his tresses, look them over and see if any could use a little touching up. You can also edit your digital pictures on the fly as you select and place them into your photo album file. Is Eddie's face in shadow? Is the barber's white coat causing too much glare? The image editing window gives you an assortment of tools for making your photographs look just the way you want them to.
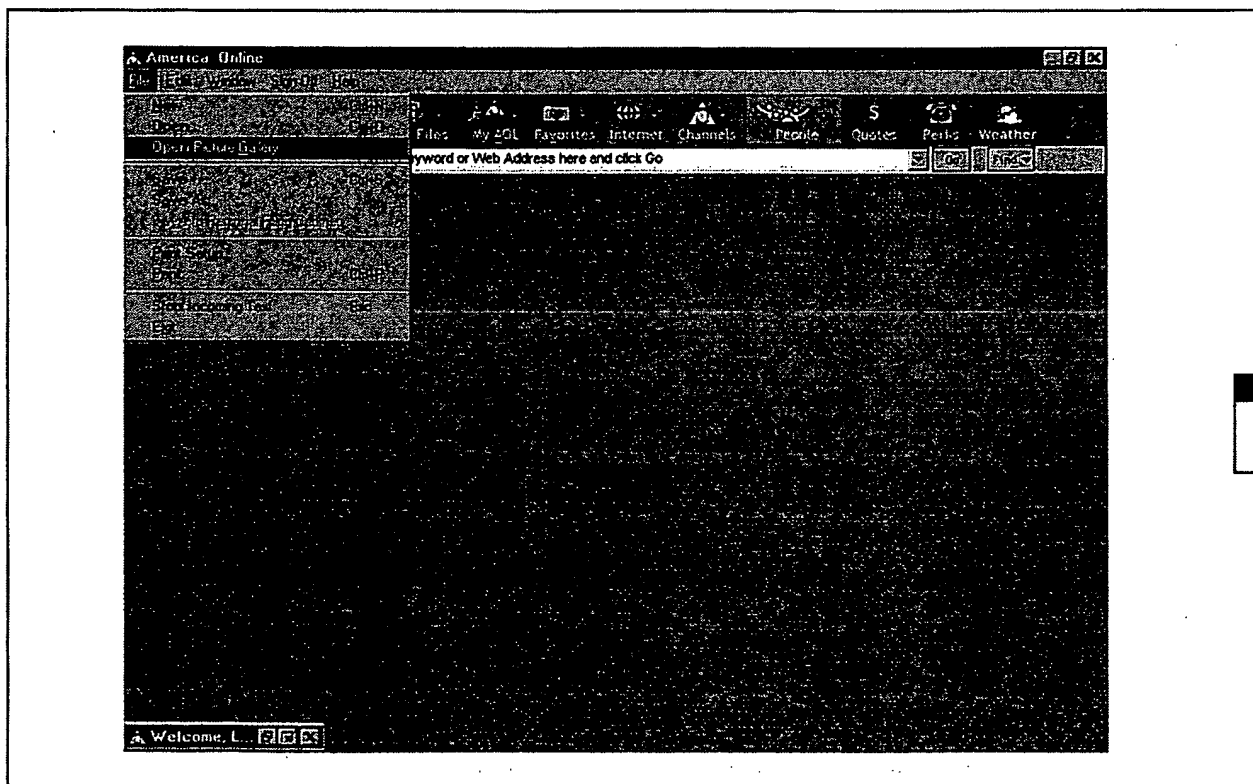
39

FIGURE 3.1
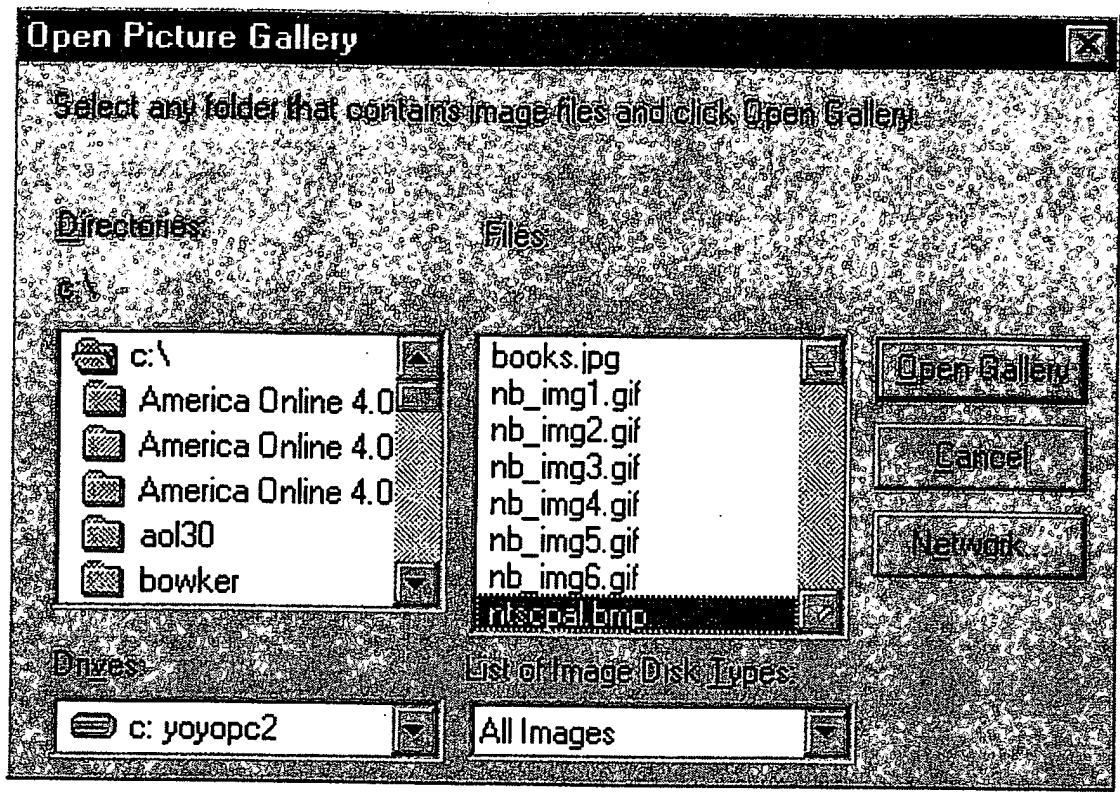
Opening the Picture Gallery
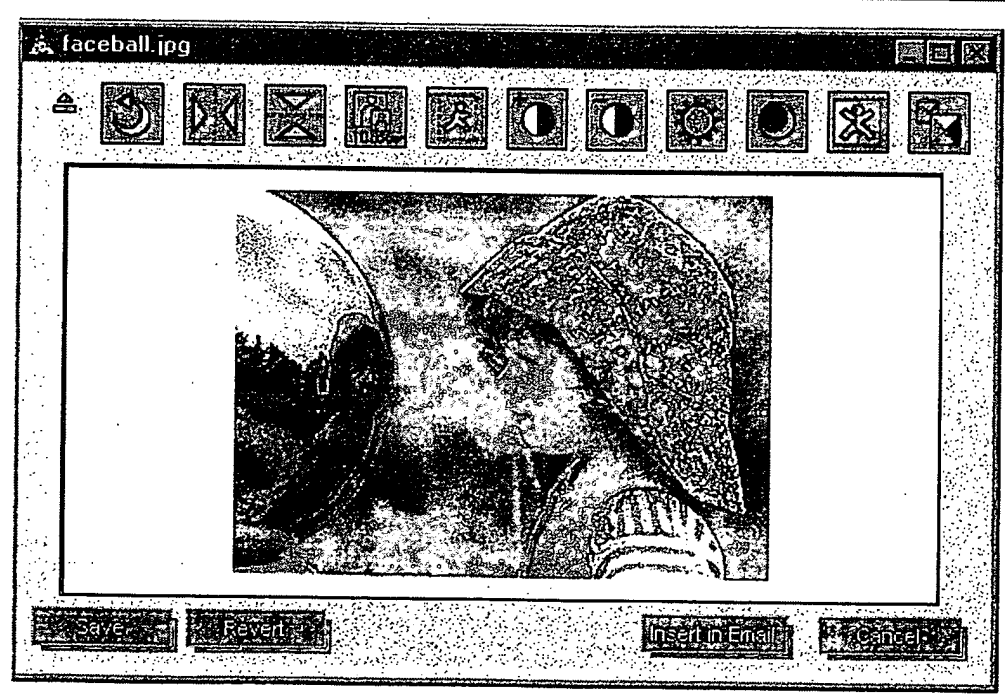
FIGURE 3.2

Browsing for digital pictures

FIGURE 3.3

Picture Gallery editing window

Display the thumbnails in the Picture Gallery dialogue box and select the picture you want to edit. When the image editing window appears, as shown in figure 3.3, make changes by clicking on the toolbar. (Chapter 2 explains in detail what each toolbar button does.) Remember toolbar button reminders appear when you pass your cursor over the icons.

Feel free to experiment. If you don't like the results, click on Revert to return to the last saved version of your picture. To avoid frustration and heartbreak, save your file whenever you like a change you just made.

Creating a Photo Album File

To create a new file for the photo album:

1. Select New from the File menu. The blank editing window will open.

2. Select Open Picture Gallery from the File menu. The Open Picture Gallery dialogue box appears. (Or, you can click on the Camera in the blank editing window and select Insert A Picture. Browse for the file with your photo, doubleclick on it, and it will appear in your new photo album file.)

3. Browse for your photo album folder. When you find it, you'll see the list of files displayed in the Files list.

4. Click on Open Gallery. The Open Pictures dialogue box will appear with thumbnails of your pictures.

TEN TIPS FOR THE PERFECT DIGITAL ALBUM

The following tips can help you create a digital photo album that your friends and family will enjoy looking at for years to come.

1. Choose pictures with a common theme.

2. Use sharp, clear pictures, or touch them up until they are.

3. Use both vertically and horizontally oriented pictures for more interesting compositions.

4. Label each photograph with a caption.

5. Use humor—everyone loves to laugh.

6. Use background and text colors that highlight your album and pictures.

7. Use pictures of different sizes to add variety to the layout.

8. Edit pictures in the image editing window before adding them to your photo album.

9. Crop out unnecessary or unwanted areas to make your subjects stand out more.

10. Use only a few pictures for each album so others can download and view them quickly.

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5. Select a picture and then click on it, drag, and drop the picture into your photo album file.

6. Select Save As from the File menu. The Save As dialogue box appears.

7. Choose a name.

8. Click on Save.

To enter text:

1. Place your cursor where you want to enter the text.

2. Begin typing.

3. Select the text by placing your cursor at the beginning of the line, holding down your mouse key, and dragging it to the end of the line.

4. Select a font from the pull-down font list.

5. Select a font size from the pull-down size list.

6. Use the toolbar buttons to format your text. Hint: Sometimes less is more! If there is an existing text file that you want to insert, click on the camera in the blank editing window and select Insert Text File. Locate the file in Open Text File and doubleclick on it. It will then appear in your photo file.

To add a background color:

1. Click on the A symbol with the blue background. The Color Palette dialogue box appears.

2. Select a color and click on OK to return to the text editing window.

To add a patterned background image:

1. Click on the Camera and select Background Picture.

2. When the Open dialogue box displays, browse for a folder that contains a background image (you may be able to find some that were

included on your operating system). It can be a prefabricated background file, or another photograph that you've selected.

3. When the list of files displays on the Files list, click on Open. Your background image will appear in your file.

Adding the Final Touches

Congratulations! You've just completed your first online photo album. Once you've got your photographs and captions together, look everything over and add the final touches. Maybe you'd like to create a cover page to set off your best picture. Remember to vary your alignment to keep the individual pages interesting, and be sure the text is legible and appealing. Don't be afraid to get silly, but it's just as easy to strive for an elegant, clean design. Don't forget to share the album by sending it as an e-mail attachment or printing it out.

AOL's GraphicSuite

AOL offers a CD-ROM-based collection of tools for editing and organizing digital pictures. GraphicSuite (figure 3.4) contains top-rated programs and utilities from many leading software publishers. Aside from all the tools you need, the CD includes 10,000 royalty-free photos and images. For further information, use keyword **GraphicSuite**.

Other Brilliant Ideas

Now that you've got the basics down, you can create all kinds of keepsakes and mementos to keep or give as gifts. Here are some ideas to get you going:

- Make a baby album. Whether you're the lucky parent or you want to celebrate a friend's or relative's new arrival, no one ever has enough pictures of a new baby. Creating a baby album is fun and easy. Send it to parents, grandparents, friends, and coworkers. Print out a copy and present it as a scroll tied up with a pink or blue ribbon.

- Design custom greeting cards. Open a picture in the Picture Gallery's image editing window, turn it upside down by clicking on Flip Image
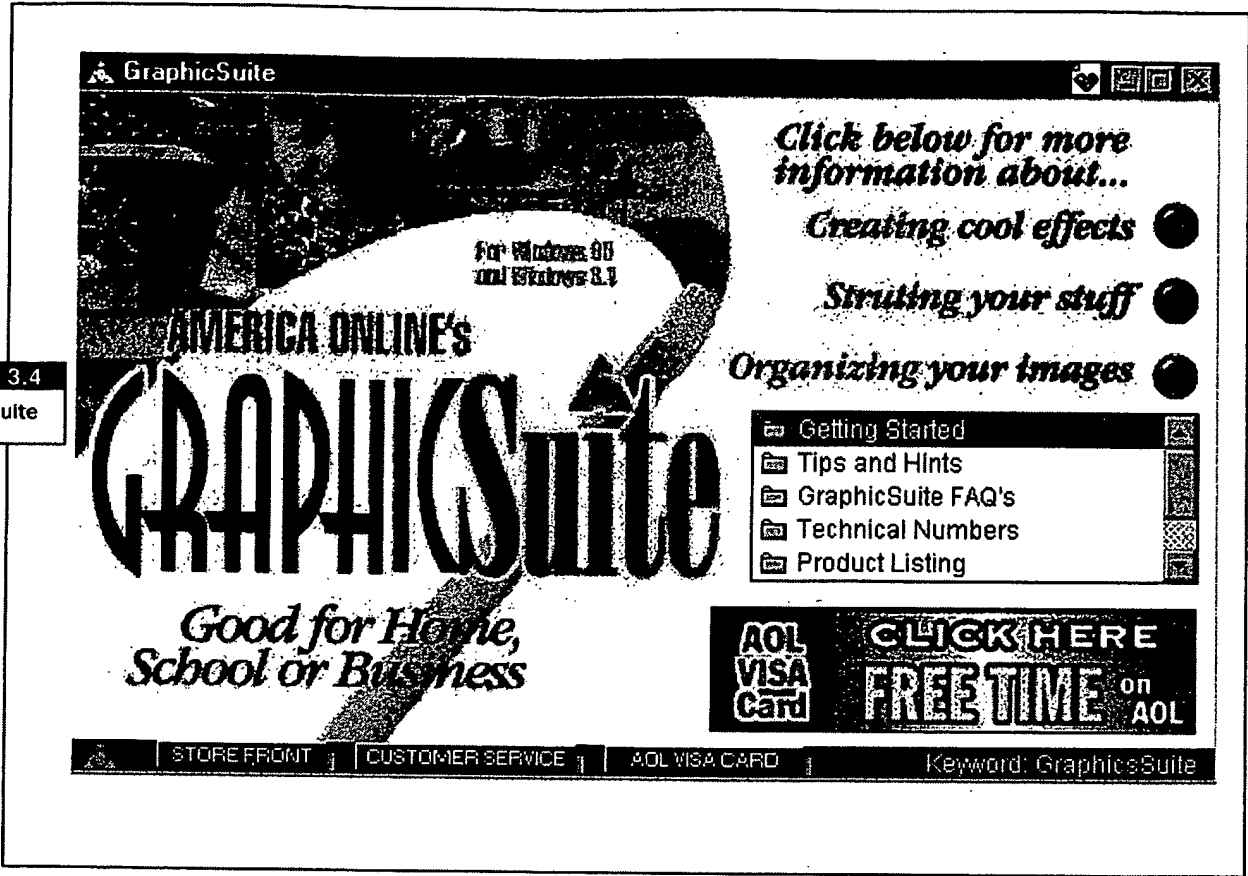
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Vertically, then save the image. Open a new file, insert the picture, and save the file. Print out the picture and fold the page over for an instant greeting card. If the picture is positioned too close to the lower edge of the page, return to the greeting card file, place your cursor above the picture, and press the Enter key a couple of times.

- Create custom notepads. Even the person who has everything can always use some scratch paper for jotting down notes. Place a small digital picture (no more than two inches by two inches) in a new file, enter your witty caption below it in a fun or elegant font, and center the picture and the text. Print out 20 copies and staple them inside a manila folder (the staples should go along the top of the pages). Print out another copy and glue it to the front of the folder, as a cover page.

- Create calendars, screen savers, and more with software like Creative Wonders' PhotoCreations All-in-One Studio (visit Creative Wonders at keyword **Creative Wonders**). You can use just about any theme for calendar pictures, including pets, gardens, cars, friends, and family members. (Chapter 10 explains how to have calendars professionally printed.)

PHOTOGRAPHY POINTERS

Sooner or later, everyone grabs a camera and tries to take pictures of someone or something. No matter how much or how little experience you have, there are useful tips to remember and use. Here are a few you might find invaluable:

1. **Keep your camera ready.** You can't get that great shot if your camera is locked in the trunk of your car or at the bottom of your suitcase.

2. **Get close.** The closer you get to your subject, the better your pictures are going to be. Getting close eliminates unnecessary backgrounds and shows your subject more clearly.

3. **Keep people busy.** Keeping people busy while you're photographing them gives your pictures a sense of spontaneity and eliminates stiff or static poses: your subjects will have more natural and relaxed expressions.

4. **Use simple backgrounds.** Using simple backgrounds keeps the focus on your subject and gives you clearer, stronger compositions.

5. **Place your subject off center.** Putting your subject a little off center makes your composition more dynamic and interesting.

6. **Include foreground objects in scenic pictures.** When you put objects in the foreground of scenic pictures, you add a sense of distance, depth, and dimension.

7. **Hold your camera steady.** Clear, sharp pictures are impossible to get if you don't hold your camera steady, so press the shutter button gently, brace your arm, or use a tripod if necessary.

8. **Look for good lighting.** Lighting is the most essential component of taking good pictures. Good lighting exposes film properly and makes your pictures more interesting, colorful, and flattering to your subject.

9. **Use your flash.** The flash built into most cameras can improve your pictures by providing extra light when you need it.

10. **Choose the right film.** There are different film speeds for different conditions. For example, 100-speed film is best for pictures taken in bright sunlight, 200-speed film is better for slow- to moderate-speed action and variable lighting situations, and 400-speed film is better for extended flash range and fast-action outdoor shots.

Adapted from *KODAK: Top Ten Techniques,* © Eastman Kodak Company, 1994–1998. Kodak's Web site is at http://www.kodak.com.

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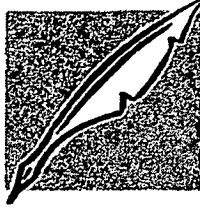
Knowledge of basic photography terms can help you take better pictures and discuss your new hobby with other photographers.

- **Ambient light** The available light around your subject; light already existing in an indoor or outdoor setting.
- **Angle of view** The area you see through the lens, determined by the lens type you use.
- **Background** The scene appearing behind the subject.
- **Backlighting** The light coming from behind the subject; this can make the subject stand out darkly against the background, producing a silhouette.
- **Camera angles** The position of the camera relative to the subject; this can be used to create the effect of an unusual viewpoint.
- **Contrast** The range of difference between light and dark areas in a picture or negative.
- **Cropping** Printing only part of the picture, usually to create a more pleasing effect or composition.
- **Definition** The clarity of detail in a photograph.
- **Diffuse lighting** Low or moderate contrast in lighting, like an overcast day.
- **Double exposure** Two pictures taken on the same frame of film or two negatives printed to overlap on one piece of photographic paper.
- **Exposure** The amount of time that film or print paper is exposed to light.
- **Fill-in light** Additional light like flashes, lamps, or reflectors that reduce necessary exposure time.
- **Flash** A brief and intense burst of light from a flashbulb or electronic flash unit to enhance available light for a picture.
- **Flat lighting** Lighting that gives pictures very little contrast and a minimum of shadows.
- **Foreground** The area between the camera and the subject.
- **Front lighting** Light illuminating the side of the subject facing the camera.
- **Overexposure** Too much light reaching the film, producing a very light print.
- **Panorama** A broad view of a scene, usually a scenic picture.
- **Photo file index print** Small prints or thumbnail-sized versions of pictures that make ordering reprints and enlargements easier.
- **Processing** Developing, fixing, and washing exposed film or photographic paper to produce negatives or prints.
- **Side lighting** Light striking the subject to the side of the camera, producing high contrast shadows and highlights.
- **Soft lighting** Light producing low or moderate contrast, like on an overcast day.
- **Timed exposure** Long exposure made in seconds or minutes, usually with the aid of a tripod.
- **Underexposure** When too little light reaches the film and produces a dark or muddy print.

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- Design coffee mugs and T-shirts. Put your mug on a mug! Use a group photo from a recent reunion or celebration, a picture of your dog or cat, your backyard, your trip to the Grand Canyon, your kids—anything you can think of. (Chapter 10 tells you how to use digital pictures to prepare customized gifts and have them printed for you.)

- Make your own reprints. Why pay to have reprints of your favorite photos made? With a color printer, you can create your own reprints anytime you want and give them away as gifts. (Chapter 13 tells you how to enlarge, reduce, touch up, and print your digital pictures.)

- Become your group's historian. If you've stayed in touch with old classmates, former coworkers, or any other special group of people over the years, make a "where are they now" photo album. Gather old and new photographs, along with information about everyone's current lives. For each person, put the photographs of their former and current selves together, along with a paragraph about what they were doing then, and what they're doing now. Share your efforts with the whole group.

- Create an electronic portfolio. If you're an artist, designer, or craftsperson, create an online photo album of your best work. Meet other artists and post your portfolio at the Computer Artists Online forum (keyword: **AOTW**).

- Show off your collections. No matter how obscure you think your collection is, you can pretty much bet that someone on the AOL service shares your interest. Get together with fellow collectors to exchange albums and tips. Start off with a visit to the Hobby Central forum (keyword: **Hobby**).

5

THE GREAT PHOTO SWAP: POSTING PICTURES FOR MATES, DATES, AND ONLINE BUDDIES

Think of your new skills with digital pictures as an engraved invitation to the biggest party on earth. In this chapter you'll learn ways to meet new friends and potential dates and share pictures with old friends and family. We'll take you through each step of posting your pictures plus an online bio in AOL picture areas, creating a personal profile you can e-mail to people, and setting up online events featuring digital pictures. So read on, if you want to meet new people, see old friends, or look for romance. And who doesn't?

Here are just a few of the ways you can share your digital pictures:

- **Post them on AOL.** Whether you're looking for friendship or romance or simply want to let the world know who you are, AOL offers numerous areas where you can post your picture and some biographical information.

- **Create a personal profile.** You can also create a personal profile to e-mail to your online Buddies.

- **Visit online forums and chat areas.** Whenever you exchange information with people and talk with them regularly, you naturally get curious about what they look like. They want to see you too. Forums and chat areas allow you to exchange digital pictures of yourselves.

- **Have an online party.** Reserve a chat room and host a party—with pictures. First, send out some enticing invitations, then gather the pictures of everyone attending and e-mail them to all the guests. When guests arrive in the chat room, toast one another while you chat and enjoy the pictures together.

Create a Personal Profile

Your personal profile document, like the one shown in figure 5.1, is a useful tool to create so you don't have to keep introducing yourself to new online contacts. Think of it as a digital calling card, complete with a flattering photo. Send it to current and potential online pals as an e-mail attachment, and encourage them to send you theirs. Those who don't have one might be inspired by seeing yours.

Your personal profile does more than save you from having to type the same information every time you meet someone new. Since AOL posting areas only let you include a limited amount of biographical information, personal profiles give you a chance to get creative and let your personality shine through.

Creating a personal profile is easy. Select New from the File menu to open a blank document, click on the Picture icon (the camera) to insert your digital picture, and then type your information.
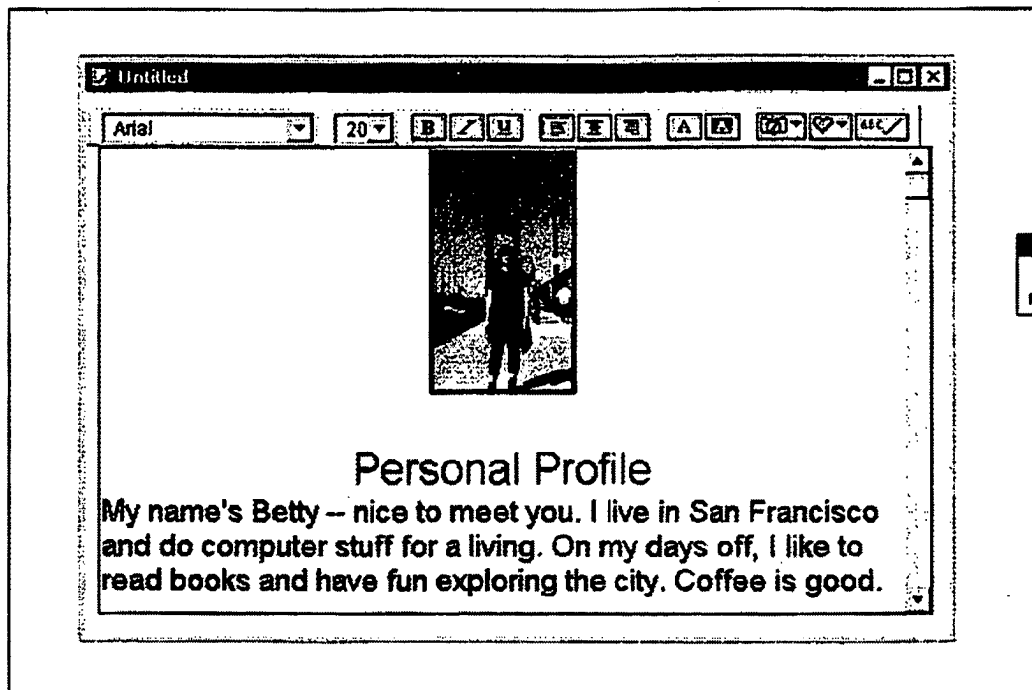
FIGURE 5.1
Create a personal profile

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

First impressions count—even when you're online. Your personal profile can reveal as much or as little about you as you want. Be quirky, serious, hilarious, or intriguing, but always put your best foot forward. Don't worry about being perfect. Concern yourself with conveying a real sense of who you are to someone who knows nothing about you.

When creating your personal profile, consider the following:

- **Information to include.** You'll probably want to provide general information like your name, your age, where you live, what you do for a living, whether you're married or have kids. You can also tell people what you love to do in your spare time, what your favorite and least favorite things are, what pets you have, and so on. In figure 5.1, we can read only three lines about Betty, but those three lines together with her picture tell us a lot about her.

- **Information *not* to include.** Don't give out your street address and phone number (at least not until you get to know someone better). Many peo-

ple choose not to reveal their real names, but go by their screen name instead.

- **Make your expectations clear.** Avoid needless misunderstandings. If you're only looking for friendship, say so: "I like basketball, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Chihuahuas. I'd love to hear from you if you do too." If you're in the market for true love, wear your heart on your sleeve.

- **Use a few details.** You don't have to be a great writer to create a great personal profile. A key detail or two can help your personality come through. Explain that you saw *Sleepless in Seattle* nine times, that you've just taken up rock climbing, that your ideal Saturday morning is spent reading in bed with a big mug of coffee at your side.

- **Humor goes a long way.** Humor always breaks the ice, and your comedic style reveals a lot about the kind of person you are. Tell your favorite joke or repeat a funny story about yourself.

- **Keep it brief.** Sure, you want to tell people about yourself. But don't deluge them with information. You can reveal more as you get better acquainted. Limit your personal profile to a page or page and a half.

Posting Your Picture on AOL

Chat rooms and forums are two good places to meet people who share your interests and to share your personal profile. Or drop by the online dating and romance areas like Love@AOL (keyword: **Love@AOL**) for love, AOL style. You can also take a look at other AOL members' pictures and get to know them better. So log on and find that perfect pen pal or online flirtation ... or help them find you. But before you post your pictures, read the rules. Some AOL posting areas accept GIF, JPEG, BMP, TIF, and PICT files, but others accept only GIFs and JPEGs.

You can get started by visiting the following AOL areas:

- **AOL Portrait Gallery.** Enter the keyword **Gallery** to view photographs of your fellow AOL members or check out AOL's party pictures. Here you'll also find instructions for posting your own picture.

- **Family Gallery.** Enter the keyword **Family Gallery** to drop by and relax for a while. Hang out in the Rec Room, get to know AOL members and their

families, and exchange digital pictures and slide shows. The Family Gallery also features a special Family Children's Album and a Special Events Gallery so you can share your celebrations.

- **Love@AOL.** Meet dates or future mates by entering the keyword **Love@AOL.** Here you can view people's picture bios and post your own. This area also gives you tips on how to create an appealing personal bio and guides you through the steps of posting it. Don't miss the Romance Connection (keyword: **Romance Connection**), a great place to post a personal ad.

- **Digital City Pen Pals.** If you're looking for a pen pal, visit the Digital City Pen Pals area, as shown in figure 5.2 (keyword: **Digital City Pen Pals**). Here you can search for potential pen pals by city or by interests, and post your picture with some biographical information. If you'd like to correspond with someone from a foreign country, enter the keywords **Special Delivery** to visit the International Pen Pals area. Choose a pal who's as near as your own city or as far as the farthest continent.
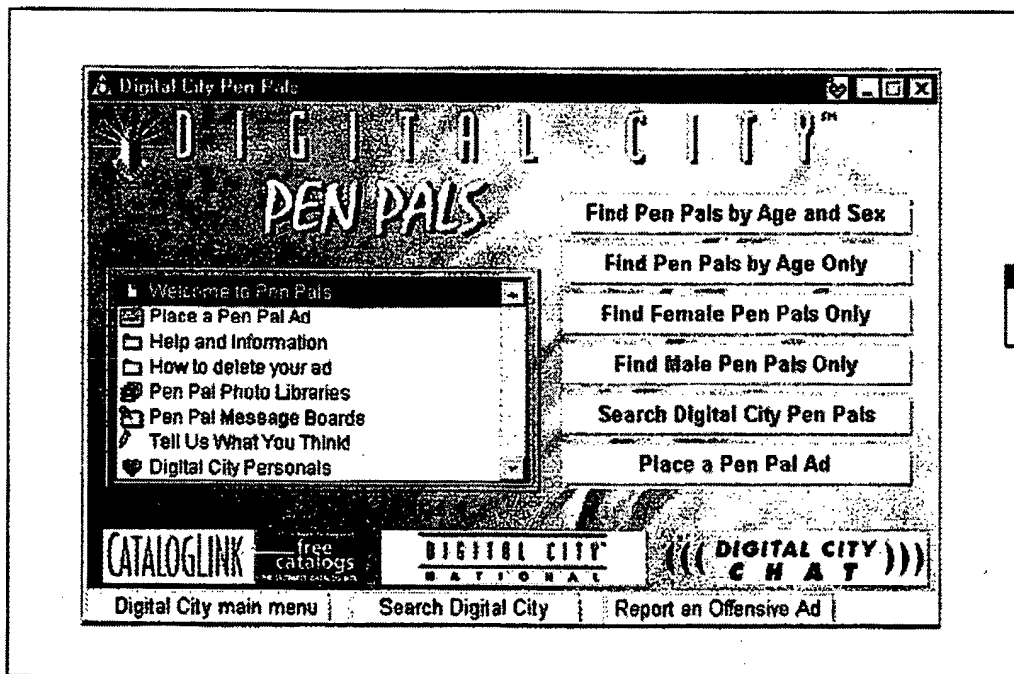
FIGURE 5.2

Where to look for pen pals

POSTING PICTURES FOR MATES, DATES, AND ONLINE BUDDIES

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Hosting Online Picture Parties

Everyone loves a good party. Why not have one online? All you have to do to host a picture party is reserve a chat room and encourage your guests to share their digital pictures. Although you can't actually display pictures in the chat room itself, you can gather the pictures and send them to everyone beforehand so you can all view them together. With a little creativity, planning, and organization, you and your family, friends, and online pals will have a fun new way to hang out together.

Steps for planning the perfect online picture party:

1. Pick an appropriate chat room to meet in.

2. Send attractive invitations to your guests. The invitations should include the date, time, and location of the party, and should also tell people to send you pictures by a certain date.

3. Gather the pictures together and send them to everyone a few days before the party. If your guests don't already know each other, prepare a list of names with little blurbs about each person.

4. Arrive early in the chat room and wait for your guests to show up. Play the talk show host—guide people through the pictures and keep the conversations going.

Think about how you want to present the collected photographs to your guests. You have a variety of options for assembling your pictures:

- **Zip them.** You can use WinZip to put your pictures in a compressed, self-extracting ZIP file. Send the ZIP file to your guests as an e-mail attachment, and provide instructions on how to extract the files to a special folder. During the party, everyone can view the pictures in the Picture Gallery. (For more about compression and ZIP files, see the "Compressing Files for Easy Transfer and Storage" sidebar in this chapter.)

- **Create a document.** You can include all of the pictures in a document and add a caption to each picture. This takes more time than simply zipping up the pictures and sending them, but provides more entertainment for your guests. (For more information about creating documents with digital pictures and captions, see chapter 4.)
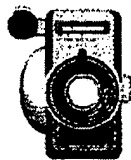
PHOTOGRAPHY TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Here are some more helpful photography terms. By the time you finish this book, you'll be talking like the pros:

- **B (Bulb) setting** Also referred to as the *shutter speed* setting, the bulb setting lets you keep the shutter open so you can take timed exposures.

- **Close-up** A picture with the main subject close to the lens.

- **Composition** The arrangement of elements in a picture, including the main subject, foreground, background, and supporting subjects.

- **Film speed** The sensitivity of film to light as indicated by a number; the higher the number (100, 200, 400), the more sensitive to light or faster the film.

- **Panning** Following a moving object with the camera to keep the object in the same relative position, or moving the camera across a stationary object to get a panoramic effect.

- **Range finder** Aids in focusing. Found on most cameras.

- **Simple camera** A camera that has few or no adjustments to make before taking a picture.

- **Aperture** The opening in the camera that lets light pass through to expose the film.

- **Pan or panochromatic film** A type of film that records all colors in tones of the same relative brightness as the human eye sees.

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You can also use AOL's Personal Publisher—the Web page creation tool (keyword: **Personal Publisher**)— to set up an online picture party site. You don't have to know anything about Web pages. As long as your images are saved as GIF or JPEG files, the Personal Publisher can get you up and running in a snap. (Chapter 12 tells you about some programs you can use to convert your digital pictures to GIFs and JPEGs.) Once you create your page, arrange the pictures, and enter your text, the Personal Publisher helps you upload all the files to your AOL Web site. When your guests arrive at the party, give them your URL, tell them to launch their browsers, and view the pictures together. (For more about creating Web pages, see chapter 7.)
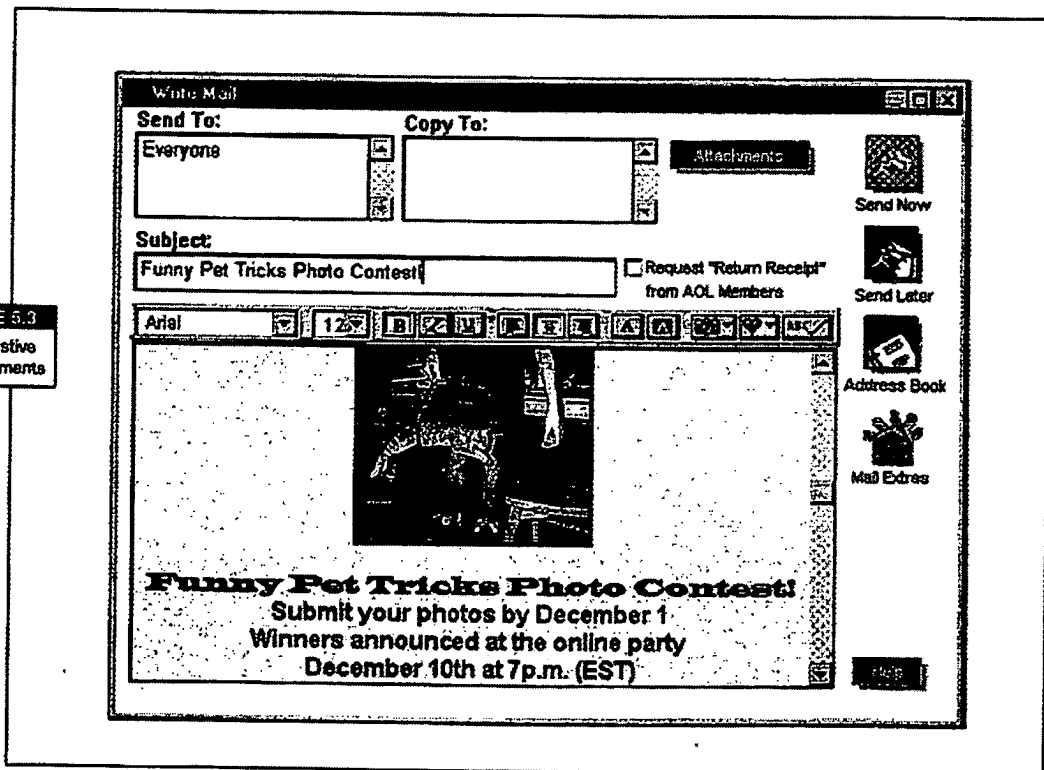
Online Party Ideas

Now that you know how to throw an online picture party, it's time to think of a theme. Let your imagination run wild, and send out festive invitations and announcements, like the one shown in figure 5.3.

Here are a few ideas to get you warmed up:

FIGURE 5.3
E-mail festive announcements

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- **A contest.** What about a digital pictures contest for the people in your favorite forum or chat room? Do you and your online pals frequent the Hobbies area? Host a Crazy Crafts contest and encourage people to send pictures of their wackiest creations. Is gardening the preferred topic? Host a Beautiful Garden contest. Whatever interests you and your friends, you can build a contest around it. Choose three or four people as judges, and e-mail elegant awards certificates to the winner and runners-up. Announce the winners at the online picture party, or post the winning photos on your Web page.

- **A day-in-the-life slide show party.** You don't have to wait for a special occasion to host a digital picture party. You and your online pals can get to know each other better by creating and sharing slide shows about your daily lives. Take pictures of typical daily scenes, like the old clunker that takes a half hour to start on cold mornings, the crowded train you take to work, your neighborhood park, and the place where you pick up your morning coffee. You can also highlight interests and recent accomplishments—like the picture of you running in that marathon to benefit your favorite charity. Show your pals a picture of you relaxing in your favorite room in your apartment or house. After the party, you'll find yourself thinking things like,

INDEXING AND ARCHIVING YOUR PICTURES ONLINE

The AOL service has many areas where you can upload or store your digital pictures. All of these areas have some basic rules for archival and storage:

1. The digital size of the file should not exceed 2.5 megabytes (MB), but it is preferable to use a file of less than 1 megabyte in size.

2. The digital picture should be 125 by 125 pixels in overall viewing size. You can crop and resize pictures to fit those specifications.

3. The digital picture should be in one of these formats: GIF, JPEG, or JPG. However, some areas do let you upload BMP, PIC, or TIF file formats. Check the guidelines for the area before you upload a digital picture.

4. You should name your digital file using your screen name or the first eight characters of your screen name.

5. The digital photos you want to upload should adhere to the AOL Terms of Service agreement (keyword: TOS).

6. Many of these areas require you to be 18 or older to upload or post your digital picture. Young people can post pictures to designated areas on Kids Only (keyword: Kids Only) and other children's areas.

"Gee, Suzy didn't seem like the dirt-biking type ... and I had no idea that Fred plays jazz guitar."

- **A costume party.** Why does Halloween have to last only one day? Get people together anytime the mood strikes for an online costume party and have them send pictures. You and your guests can hang out in the chat room and talk about how you thought up your costumes and what you did on Halloween. Vote on the best costume and e-mail prize certificates to the winners.

- **An online family reunion.** Everybody's busy. And many family members live hundreds or thousands of miles apart. If you haven't talked with Aunt Millie and her crew in ages, it may be time to host an online family reunion. In your invitation ask everyone to send recent pictures of themselves and scenes from their lives. Gather the pictures into a digital photo album and e-mail copies to everyone, or post the pictures on your Web page. When the party begins, catch up on each other's lives—and stop feeling guilty that you haven't visited or written.

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You and the people you meet online can cement new relationships and rebuild old ones through digital picture parties. Now that you know how to host one, what are you waiting for?

6

CELEBRATING! INVITATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND OTHER WAYS TO SPREAD GOOD NEWS

Your daughter just got married. Your friends are the proud parents of a new baby girl or boy. You've finally gotten that big promotion. Share the good news!

In the old days, people shouted good news from the rooftops. With digital pictures and America Online, you can save your vocal cords and reach a lot more people. This chapter introduces you to a few ways you can use technology to dazzle your friends and family while celebrating special occasions. If you're feeling ambitious, you can even pep up your online communications with a little multimedia.

Getting the Word Out

Anyone can send people store-bought invitations and announcements through the mail. But you've got a much bigger range of creative expression with online communications. Plus, you can spread the news to more people in a shorter amount of time. And, thanks to e-mail, you can send digital pictures to as many people as you want. Of course you'll get around to making copies of your photos for family and close friends. But printing and snail-mailing 30 or so pictures to friends and relatives can be expensive.

Here are a few hot ideas for designing attractive, personalized invitations, announcements, greeting cards, and more:

- **Embed digital pictures in an e-mail message.** E-mail offers you the fastest way to design an invitation or announcement with a digital picture and send it off. You can embed your digital picture directly in the e-mail message, as shown in figure 6.1, add a festive background image or color, and use the editing tools to jazz up your fonts.

- **Include digital pictures with file attachments.** If you have another program you enjoy using to create special files, attach it to the e-mail message. But make sure the application allows you to save to a file format people can open even if they don't have that particular application. You can also use special imaging software to convert and touch up files, as explained in chapter 11.

- **Write text directly on the image itself and attach it to your e-mail message.** If your digital picture is formatted as a BMP file, you can open it in Windows 95's Paint program and add text directly to the picture, as shown in figure 6.2.

- **Create your message in a word processing program.** Today's word processing applications offer a variety of formatting options that no e-mail program can match. You can design and lay out your personalized message and save it as an RTF (Rich Text Format) file. This ensures that just about anyone can open and save it, regardless of the word processing program they use.
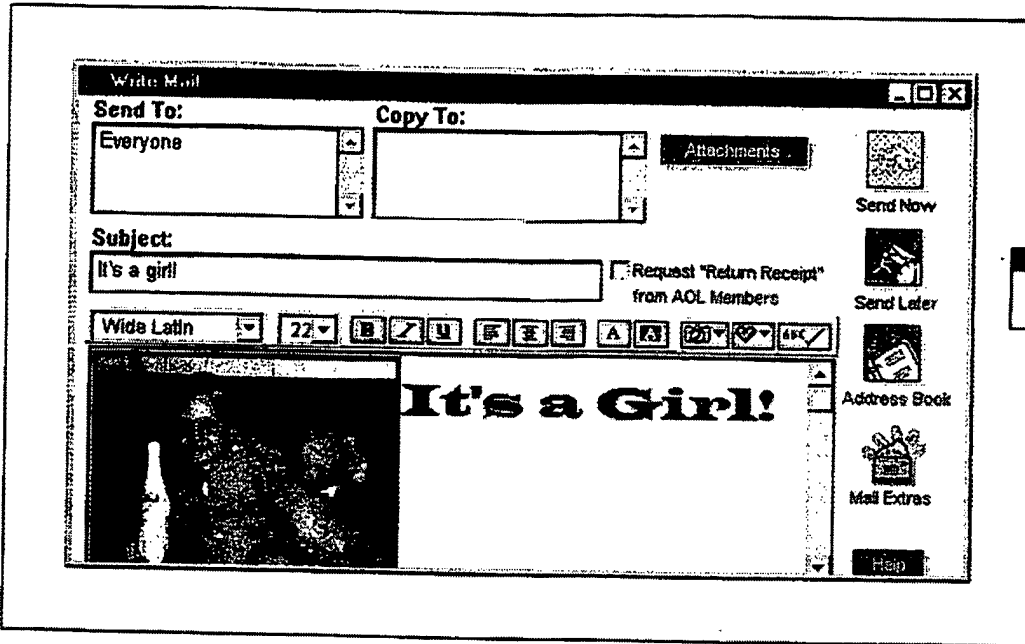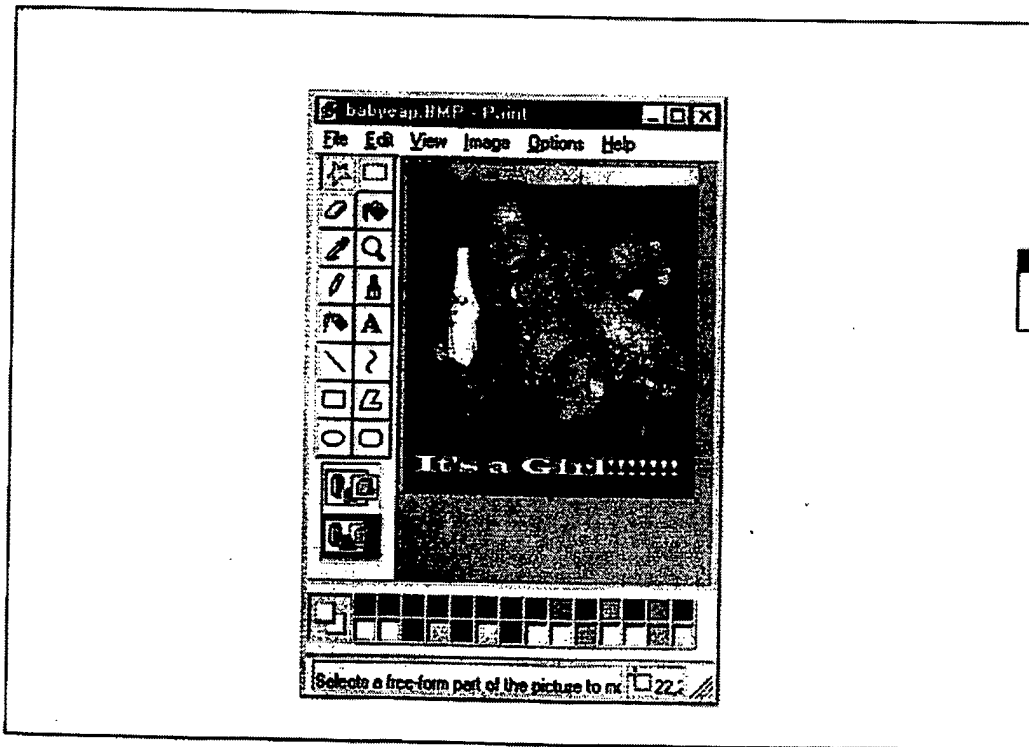
FIGURE 6.1
Festive e-mail messages

FIGURE 6.2
Windows 95's Paint program

INVITATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND OTHER WAYS TO SPREAD GOOD NEWS

- **Use Personal Publisher to create a Web page.** You won't have to send e-mail attachments or worry about whether people can view your file. Simply e-mail people your URL. (Chapter 7 talks about creating Web pages with Personal Publisher.)

And if you enjoy writing a good, old-fashioned letter, keep right on doing it. You can print out your digital pictures and send them with a personal note. Or, better yet, use digital pictures to create unique stationery.

When to Celebrate

When can you celebrate events with digital pictures? Anytime! You don't have to wait for a special occasion. Use digital pictures to design personalized greetings and let people know you're thinking of them. Before long, you'll find yourself inventing excuses for communicating with digital pictures. Your friends and relatives will delight in your new hobby.

Here are a few great reasons to send digital picture messages:

- **A new baby.** Has a friend, relative, or office mate recently welcomed a new addition to the family? Give the proud parents a wonderful gift: one less errand to run. Tell them you'd be happy to create and send announcements to everyone on their list. Have a digital picture made of the baby, and get to work!

- **Just thinking of you.** Send a greeting with a digital picture to someone you haven't talked with in a while. You can send her a photograph of yourself or of the two of you together. Or download and include a digital picture, video, or sound file that reminds you of her or that would remind her of you—for example, a scene from a place you've visited together or a sound clip from a song you both love.

- **Weddings.** Take plenty of pictures at the next wedding you attend and send them with messages to the happy couple and guests online. If the wedding is your own, send announcements to colleagues, classmates, and acquaintances who couldn't make the big day.

- **Office parties.** Your department raced through the big deadline with flying colors. Your company is launching the greatest product ever. Or

maybe you've just relocated to a new office or have a holiday party coming up. Celebrating milestones and big occasions with coworkers, clients, and partners builds a sense of teamwork while rewarding accomplishments. Take group pictures, before-and-after pictures of a work area, or a party in progress.

- **Birthdays and anniversaries.** Surprise your friends, business associates, spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, mom, dad, Aunt Louise, and Uncle Harold by remembering birthdays and anniversaries with digital picture greetings and multimedia. Impress everyone with your foolproof memory—they don't have to know about your AOL Address Book with all the pictures and notes.

- **A new purchase.** Someone just bought a new condo? Your teenager just bought his first wreck with the money he's been saving up for years? Important purchases represent milestones in our lives. Take a picture and announce the good news or send your congratulations.

Tips for E-mailing Messages

E-mail is convenient, useful, and fun. But sending fancy messages with backgrounds and embedded images or attaching files takes a little practice. File attachments with digital pictures, sounds, or video can be surprisingly large. So before sending that QuickTime movie clip of a scene from Sharon Stone's latest movie to your friend (who is madly in love with her), make sure he has QuickTime software and doesn't mind receiving e-mail messages with large attached files. Multimedia, or files with lots of digital pictures, can easily tip the scales at an enormous 2MB—which can take a half hour to receive over the average user's 28 Kbps modem.

These guidelines can help you follow proper e-mail etiquette:

- **Send formatted e-mails with caution.** Some people aren't lucky enough to have exciting e-mail programs like yours. Before sending e-mails with formatted text or backgrounds, check with your recipient to see if it's OK. You can safely e-mail richly formatted messages to other AOL users and people who use Internet Explorer's or Netscape Communicator's e-mail program. Anyone else may have trouble with your messages—or won't see them as you intended.

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- **Use common fonts along with common sense.** Fancy fonts may tempt you, but try to resist. If the people you send messages to don't have the same fonts, your messages and file attachments won't display as you intend. Stick with fonts that everyone is likely to have: Times, Arial, Zapf Dingbats, Courier, and Wing Dings.

- **Avoid sending files larger than 250 KB.** Anything larger can take a long time for your correspondents to download. And don't forget that during all that time they won't be able to get any of their other e-mail. You can use a compression utility like WinZip to make your file smaller. (For more about compression, see chapter 5.)

- **Consider cross-platform compatibility issues.** If someone on your e-mail list just *loves* her Macintosh and would never part with it, think before attaching files. Macintosh users cannot open ZIP files unless they have a special program. You can send them to the AOL Software Center (keyword: **Software**) to see what is available. Also mention TUCOWS (http://www.tucows.com) where they can download UnZip for Macintosh. In addition, unless your Macintosh pal is a fellow AOL member, she needs special plug-ins to view PCX, BMP, and TIF images, as well as WAV and MIDI sound files, and AVI movies.

When you send e-mail, digital pictures, and attached multimedia files to other AOL members, you don't have to worry most of the time. AOL

supports most common image and multimedia file formats to make your online experience seamless. But be kind to your pals who are not on the AOL service. Better yet, encourage them to get with the program and become members. If you're successful, you can earn a bonus; visit keyword **Friend** for details.

Adding Some Multimedia

There's no better way to liven up your invitations and announcements than with multimedia effects. AOL has built-in support for popular multimedia file formats for a richer online experience. Imagine sending invitations to a surprise party for your parents' golden anniversary with a button people can click on to play your parents' wedding song. Or sending a friend a digital birthday card with a video clip of his favorite movie star or musician, or a scene from the old neighborhood.

Working with multimedia is easy. First get the files—download them from AOL or record them yourself. Then design your personalized messages with a multimedia-capable software program such as Creative Wonders Greeting Card Maker. For details about this and other good programs, visit the Family Computing Center (keyword: **Family Computing**). Various channels and forums offer lots of downloadable audio, video, and digital picture files you can use to create impressive invitations, announcements, and greetings. Drop by American Greetings (keyword: **American Greetings**) to visit their electronic card collection and to purchase animated greeting cards. Or visit the PC Animation & Video Forum (keyword: **A&V Forum**) for software

MORE PHOTOGRAPHY TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Following are more photography terms you will find useful:

- **Bracketing** Taking additional pictures of the same subject using longer and shorter exposures to compensate for uncertain light conditions.

- **Contact print** A print of the entire negative strip made by laying it directly on the photographic paper.

- **Candid pictures** Unposed portraits (often taken without the subject's knowledge).

- **Negative** Developed film. Negatives show the images in reverse.

- **Positive** A print from the negative or a slide transparency.

- **Print** A positive on photographic paper.

- **Thin negative** An underexposed or underdeveloped negative.

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FIGURE 6.3
Record sound
files with
Media Player

Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3.rmi - Media Playe...

File   Edit   Device   Scale   Help

0:00   1:00   2:00   3:00   4:00   5:00   6:07

00:00 (min:sec)
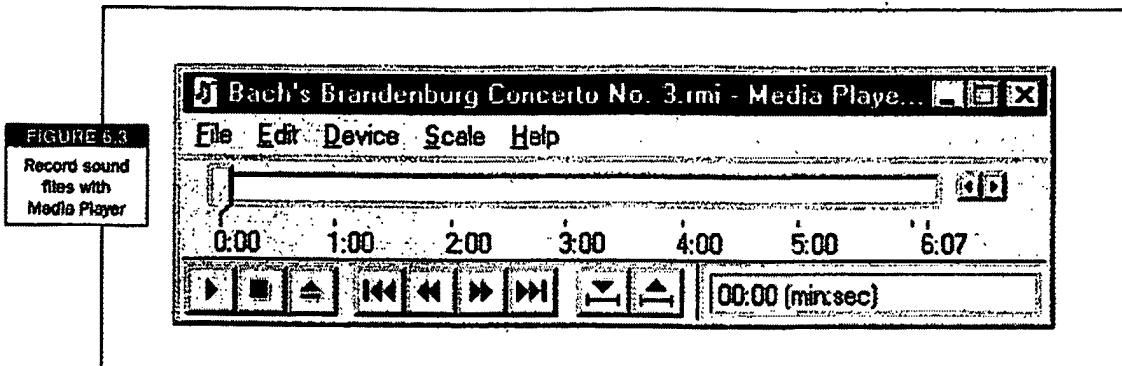
resources, downloadable files, and more. Finally, try the Online Classroom area (keyword: **Online Classroom**).

Getting Multimedia Files

So where do you get multimedia files, you ask? AOL and the Internet abound with them. The channels and forums offer audio, video, and shockwave movie files that you can download and use in your personalized messages. Shockwave movies are fun-and-games animations that multimedia designers create in a program called Macromedia Director. With minimal equipment and some creativity, you can also make your own multimedia files. Windows 95's Media Player application, as shown in figure 6.3, plays back sound files and AVI movies, and also records sound. AVI is the standard video format for Windows. If you have a sound-capable system, all you need to buy is a microphone in order to record audio. Recording video is more expensive, but still within reach. Connectix's QuickCam and other similar products start at around $100. They plug into the parallel port on your computer so you can record AVI movies instantly. To find out more about QuickCam and similar products, visit the Digital Shop at keyword **Digital Shop**.

Here are some tips for personalizing your downloaded multimedia files:

- **Local scenes.** Just moved to Seattle? Visit Digital City (keyword: **Digital City**), download the sights and sounds of your new hometown, and send them to the folks back in San Diego.

- **The world of sports.** So, your office mate is an avid Boston Red Sox fan? Go to the Sports channel (keyword: **Sports**), get video highlights and pictures from a recent game, and send them to him.

- **Pop culture and entertainment.** Stop by the Entertainment channel (keyword: **Entertainment**) for clips from popular movies, television shows, and tunes. Send all your friends the best jokes from the latest episodes of *Seinfeld* and *Letterman*.

- **Online vacation.** Not enough time and money for two weeks in Barbados? Exchange pictures and videos of the glorious beaches you wish you'd visited, courtesy of the Travel channel (keyword: **Travel**).

No matter what subject grabs your interest, you can find the right sound, video, and digital picture files of it. AOL is overflowing with sites that offer sound effects, songs, television theme music, and video clips. Browse around and find the ones you want.

Communicating with Multimedia

You can easily share multimedia files by attaching them to e-mail messages. But don't stop there. You might not be able to embed movies and sounds directly in an

FIGURE 6.4
Create Web pages with sound and video

e-mail message (at least not *yet*), but a variety of inexpensive, user-friendly technologies can help you create exciting multimedia files that you can send as attachments.

Here's a list:

- **Personal Publisher.** The Web gives you an ideal medium for announcing good news with digital pictures and multimedia, as shown in figure 6.4. With AOL Personal Publisher, you can easily personalize a Web page with background music, embedded sound and video files, pictures, and more. You can either send an e-mail message with your URL, or attach all of your Web page files to the e-mail message so people can view your Web page offline. When you send people your Web pages or refer them to your Web site, you don't have to worry about what kind of computers or online service they use.

- **Presentation software.** Popular presentation programs like Microsoft PowerPoint and Gold Disk Astound make it simple to create slide shows and save the files so others can view them. When you use these programs, you don't have to worry about what fonts people have on their system.

- **Word processing software.** Some word processing programs, like Microsoft Word, offer multimedia features so you can insert videos and sound files into your documents. However, your recipient would have to have the same program—or a program with equivalent multimedia capabilities—in order to open your files.

In addition, a host of shareware and commercial software developers have created inexpensive, user-friendly multimedia programs including Slimshow, a shareware presentation program, and FunE-Cards, a shareware multimedia greeting card program. These programs are made especially for people who want to communicate with multimedia without having to spend a lot of money or delve into complex technologies. Search for retail software and shareware at the AOL Store and the Software Center.

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CREATING WEB PAGES WITH PERSONAL PUBLISHER

Have you been admiring other people's Web pages and wishing you could create your own? Well, now's the time. Make up a Web page to share your photographs of the tucked-away village you visited in Italy (and that wonderful restaurant you discovered), the vase you made in your pottery class, your favorite neighborhood hangout, or your dog roughhousing with his fellow canines in the park. Or build a community. For example, if you're an expert in calligraphy or model trains, you can attract fellow hobbyists to your page with news, tips, links to resources, and pictures of your own work.

Everyone can view Web pages no matter what kind of computer or browser they use. You can either add Web pages to your Web site, or you can send them as e-mail attachments so the recipient can view them in her Web browser.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Family album.** Create a family album (as explained in chapter 3) with digital pictures, then send the URL to all your relatives.

- **Hobby/special interest page.** Have fun promoting your interests. Fascinate others by displaying your collection of antique inkwells or your original artwork.

- **Business page.** Tell the world about the miniature toy soldiers you produce or the chimney sweep service you provide. (For more information, see chapter 9.)

- **Art page.** Here's your chance to publish the poetry you've been hiding in your desk drawer. Have an artist friend take photographs or draw pictures to accompany it. Or display your own paintings, crafts, or photographs.

- **My town.** Do you love the city you've just moved to? Have you lived all your life in the Southwest? Tell people all about it: display pictures and helpful links for those who might want to visit.

- **Online newsletter.** Use the Web to publish a full-color newsletter about anything that grabs you: polar bears, the rain forest, your home office, whatever. No printing costs!

- **Places I've been.** Are you a world traveler? Show people pictures of your adventures in the Australian outback, and share your perspectives on places most people only read about.

Jazz up your pages with sound, GIF animations, and scrolling marquees. This chapter guides you through the steps of creating your own Web site with Personal Publisher. It also gives you pointers on where to go for extra help, ideas, and resources for creating Web pages.

Personal Publisher and Creating Web Pages

Web page publishing is complicated and technical, right? Wrong. In fact, if you know what you want to say and have all your files organized, putting together your

Web page can only take a minute—literally. Personal Publisher even allows you to create your Web pages offline. However, you do have to log on to the AOL service to put your Web page online where everyone can see it. The files will be stored on the AOL file server, which is automatically accessed by anyone who types your Web site address from the Net. Find out more about Web pages by visiting On the Net (keyword: **On the Net**).

Step by step, let's create a Web page about your trip to Australia right now. Note that the order of the steps may differ depending on the template chosen. The basic function will remain the same.

Step 1: Gather Your Material

Like anything else, once you get organized, you're halfway there. Before you begin, gather together all the materials you plan to use: photographs of Sydney, videos of kangaroos and koalas, clips from *Crocodile Dundee*. Think about what you want to say and what sites you want to create links to. Gather your digital pictures and multimedia files and place them in the same folder for easy access.

Here's what you'll need to do before you begin creating your Web page:

- **Create a Web page folder and move your files into it.** For your Web page to work properly, you should store everything that you plan to use in the same folder. This includes your digital pictures, Web pages (HTML documents), and multimedia files. Fortunately, Personal Publisher handles this task automatically as you use the Web page templates.

- **Convert your digital pictures to GIFs and JPEGs.** Web browsers can only display GIF and JPEG digital pictures, so you'll need to convert your TIF and PCX images. Personal Publisher will automatically convert your BMP files to JPEG. GIFs and JPEGs have small file sizes, which helps you make the most of the 2 MB of free Web space that AOL provides to every member. (Chapter 11 tells you more about graphics programs you can use to convert digital pictures.)

- **Compose your text.** Use the built-in text editor to write what you want to say on your Web page. Keep this file open while you create your Web page so you can copy and paste the text.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING YOUR WEB PAGE

Personal Publisher makes it quick and easy for you to create exactly the Web page you want. Here are a few tips for making the process even easier.

1. Be prepared. Make sure you have all the digital image, sound, video, animated pictures, and multimedia files you want to use and that you know where those files are stored on your computer.

2. Study other Web pages to get ideas for creating your own. To make yours appealing and informative, learn from what others have done.

3. Plan your Web pages in advance. Outline how you want your page to look, where you want graphics placed, and so on.

4. Test all your files to make sure they're functioning properly.

5. Test all sites you want to link; make sure the URLs all work and the pages haven't moved or disappeared.

6. Make sure your graphic files are as small as they can be without compromising their quality. Graphic files that are large take a long time to load. If they take too long, they can discourage visitors from remaining at your page.

7. Use all the resources on the AOL service to learn how to incorporate graphics and multimedia files on your Web page. The more you know, the better you will be at creating your Web page.

8. Check all the areas of your pages to make sure they look the way you want them to. Double-check all your links to make sure they all work properly once you put them on your Web page.

- **Gather your links.** Make sure all the pages you want to link to appear on your Favorites list. Personal Publisher displays a list of your Favorites to help you add links to your page. You can also type in the addresses using the Links option.

Don't worry if you haven't searched for the best movie clips yet, or if that last roll of film is still in your camera. You can update your page as often as you want. You can even create more than one page and link them together.

Step 2: Create Your Web Page

Next, select a design that best suits your needs from the list of templates. Then title your page—"Highlights from Down Under"—and pick a background and text colors to create the look you want. Once you've set up your page, you can enter or copy and paste your descriptions of everything you saw and did in Australia. To add links and create a custom color scheme, turn on Advanced Options. You can do this at any time by clicking on Advanced in the Personal Publisher application window. Keep in mind that each template offers slightly different options. These instructions apply to most of them.

To begin creating your Web page:

1. Use keyword **Personal Publisher**.

2. Click the Create button

3. When the Welcome to Personal Publisher dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 7.1, select a template from the scrolling list and click on Begin. Click on Preview Template to check it out before you make a commitment.

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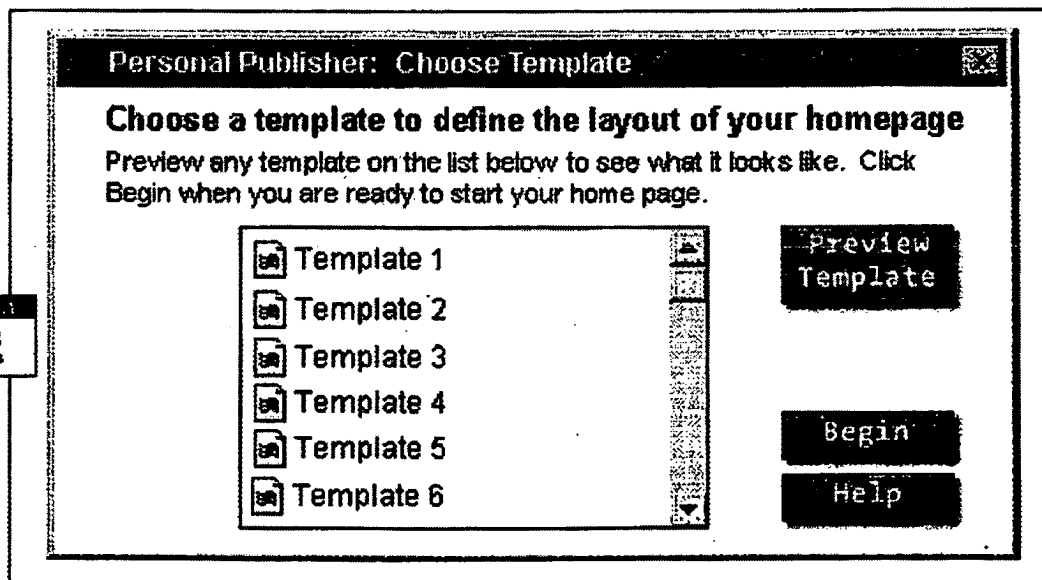
FIGURE 7.1
Selecting
templates

Advanced Options

By choosing Advanced Options you will have access to the following features (note: not all screens have additional features):

◆ **Add links to Text and Pictures**
A link will take the user to another location on the internet.

◆ **Advanced Text and Picture Formatting**
This feature will give you more control over the layout of your Pictures and Text.

◆ **Customize Color Scheme**
This feature will give you more control over the color of your Background and Text.

☐ **Click here for Advanced Options**

FIGURE 7.2

Advanced
Options

4. Select Advanced options, as shown in figure 7.2, if you'd like to make links, format text and pictures, and create your own page color scheme. (Otherwise, you'll remain in "basic" mode.)

5. When the Personal Publisher title window appears, type Highlights from Down Under in the text field, then click on Next.

6. When the background style and text color options appear, create a color scheme for your Web page. You can choose a color or image for your background, and also for your text, links, and visited links (links change color after the user clicks on them). When you finish, click on Next.

7. When the text dialogue box appears, enter your text, or copy and paste text from an open file. Text should be no more than a paragraph or two long. You can also add font and text styles to your page as you do when composing e-mail messages or documents in the text editor. When you finish entering and formatting your text, click on Next.

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GRAPHICS AND MULTIMEDIA ONLINE

f you aren't yet intrigued by multimedia, it won't be long before you are. After all, you already enjoy multimedia effects when you hear that familiar phrase "you've got mail" or watch an animated character blink its way across a Web page. Maybe you've even watched an online video presentation or two. But now we're talking about using your digital pictures to create your own feature presentations.

You don't need fancy hardware or costly software, and it doesn't require a lot of memory or a fast processing speed. Furthermore, most of the sound and animation files you will ever want to create are small

compared to some of the video presentations you'll find online. This is important to note because most of us use regular 28.8 Kbps modems, and downloading enormous files can feel like sipping the Pacific Ocean through a straw. Rest assured, new technologies are putting video and other resource-hungry multimedia within everyone's reach. Check out the new 56 Kbps modems. Many now cost under $150 at the Modem Shop on AOL (keyword: **Modem Shop**).

You can add multimedia to your Web page, send files as e-mail attachments, and download and upload all kinds of files in various forum and channel areas. And the Web browser on the AOL service is Internet Explorer, so you can take advantage of cutting-edge technologies like Shockwave, RealPlayer, and VDOLive to start enjoying multimedia right away.

Downloading and Distributing Digital Pictures and Multimedia Online

Here are just a few of the things you can download and distribute online:

- **Digital pictures.** Of course, you'll want to exchange digital pictures and display them on your Web page. Start off with a trip to the PC Graphic Arts Forum at keyword **PGR.**

- **Business materials.** With today's tools— like Microsoft's Word, Excel, and PowerPoint assistants and Adobe Acrobat—

you can distribute business documents on the Web. These programs come with special viewers people can use to see your files even if they don't have the program you used to create them. You can get Adobe Acrobat by visiting the Adobe area at keyword **Adobe**. (Microsoft Assistants are available from http://www.microsoft.com).

- **Animations.** The forums on AOL and the Web are filled with GIF animations you can download. They're fun to look at and easy to create. You can also view cutting-edge games and works of art, including Shockwave movies, with plug-ins included with your Web browser. Drop by the Animations and Video Forum at keyword **A&V Forum**.

- **Sound files.** The AOL service abounds with sound files you can enjoy—everything from simple music clips and wacky noises to sophisticated online radio broadcasts. It is surprisingly inexpensive and easy to make your own sound files. Stop by the SoundRoom (keyword: **SoundRoom**) for lots of great sound clips.

- **Video.** You can use video files to create everything from home movies to high-end product demonstrations for your small business. The Real-Player plug-in even lets you view video broadcasts online with an ordinary modem and computer. If you'd like to create videos of your own and distribute them online, you'll need to spend a little money and time. But it isn't as hard or expensive as you might think. The Entertainment channel at keyword **Entertainment** offers interactive movie reviews with video clips.

Digital Pictures and Multimedia in E-mail Messages

Perhaps the most popular way to distribute your multimedia files online is by attaching them to your e-mail messages. It's easy if you use files that are smaller than 250 K. As you've learned, you can even embed a digital picture directly in the message. But if you are going to attach a digital picture file, make sure the person on the receiving end has an AOL account or the application she needs to open your file. She can open GIFs and JPEGs in a browser, or PCX and BMP files in her Windows Paint program. TIF files require an image program like PhotoShop or PhotoPaint.
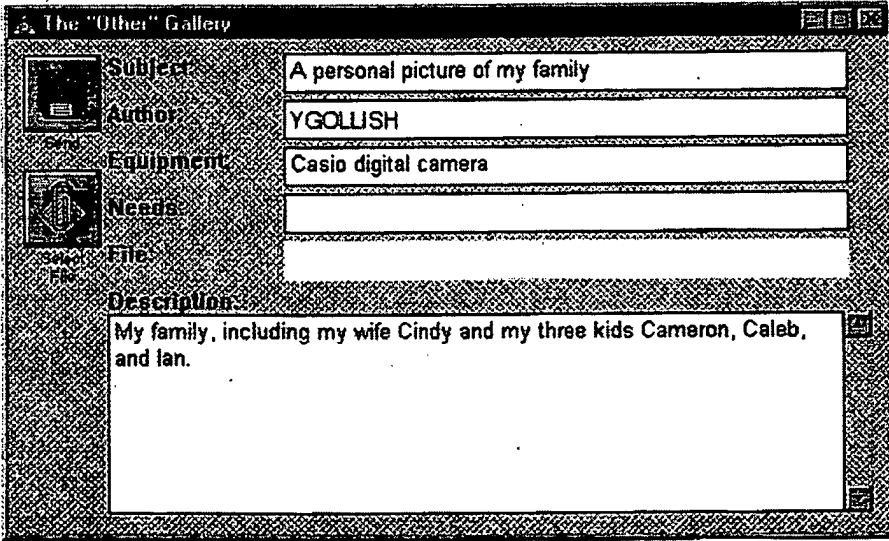
More and more members are uploading their digital pictures to designated areas on the AOL service. For example, there's the Portrait Gallery (keyword: **Gallery**), where you can download and view pictures of other AOL members and their families. Or you can upload your own. You can also exchange files on the Multimedia gallery (keyword: **A&V Forum**), the Computer channel (keyword: **Computers**), the Photography forum (keyword: **Photography Forum**), Kids Only (keyword: **Kids Only**), and many other areas.

But first, you need to know how to upload and download picture files. It's simple. To download files, visit the forum or channel areas where files are posted, and:

1. Select a picture file from the list (don't forget to keep clicking on More until the button fades).

2. Click on Read Description to find out more about the contents, and to make sure you have the right software to view it.

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FIGURE 14.1
Uploading a file to a forum

3. If the file type is supported by AOL's software (and most of them are), the file opens automatically when it finishes downloading. Otherwise, you can open it with a separate application (files download to the default directory, probably C:\AOL4\Download directory).

Many forums also allow you to post your own picture file. Make sure you check out the Read Me file to get a handle on the rules and the types of files you can post. Then, just click on Upload to post your file.

A dialogue box like the one shown in figure 14.1 will request your screen name, the name of the file, the application or hardware you used to create it, and whether someone needs special software to view it. When you finish entering your information, click on the Select File button to add your file, then click on the Send button to upload it to the area.

·We should also mention that sometimes the posting areas are full. When this happens, the Upload button looks indistinct and you can't select it. Don't worry, the forum administrator will soon create a new posting area on the forum.

On the World Wide Web

You can download, view, and play an assortment of interesting multimedia files from pages on the World Wide Web. Some multimedia files launch straight from a Web page, while other files download when you click on a link. Remember, never download a file from the Web unless you are confident it does not contain a virus, and always make sure you have permission to use someone else's pictures on your Web page or documents.

One of the easiest ways to get a picture from a Web page is simply to click the right mouse button on it and select the Save Picture As option from the pop-up menu. This trick can come in handy when you want to add a picture of a friend or online pal to a Web page you're creating and she happens to have a picture of herself on her own Web page.

If you want to upload picture files to your own personal Web page, use Personal Publisher as discussed in chapter 7. This simple Web page tool is great for getting you started. It also automatically uploads your pages for you. But, if you'd like to create Web pages that give you more control over your layouts and that support

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advanced features like frames and multimedia. Just download AOLpress, which we'll talk about later in this chapter.

Using GIF Animations

When surfing the Web, you'll frequently find that people have used an animated GIF to get your attention. Quite simply, animations are created by rapidly displaying a sequence of small GIF pictures, just as classic animation is created by displaying a sequence of still drawings. Animations are the simplest and easiest way for you to create your own multimedia files from digital pictures.

FIGURE 14.2
Microangelo GIFed
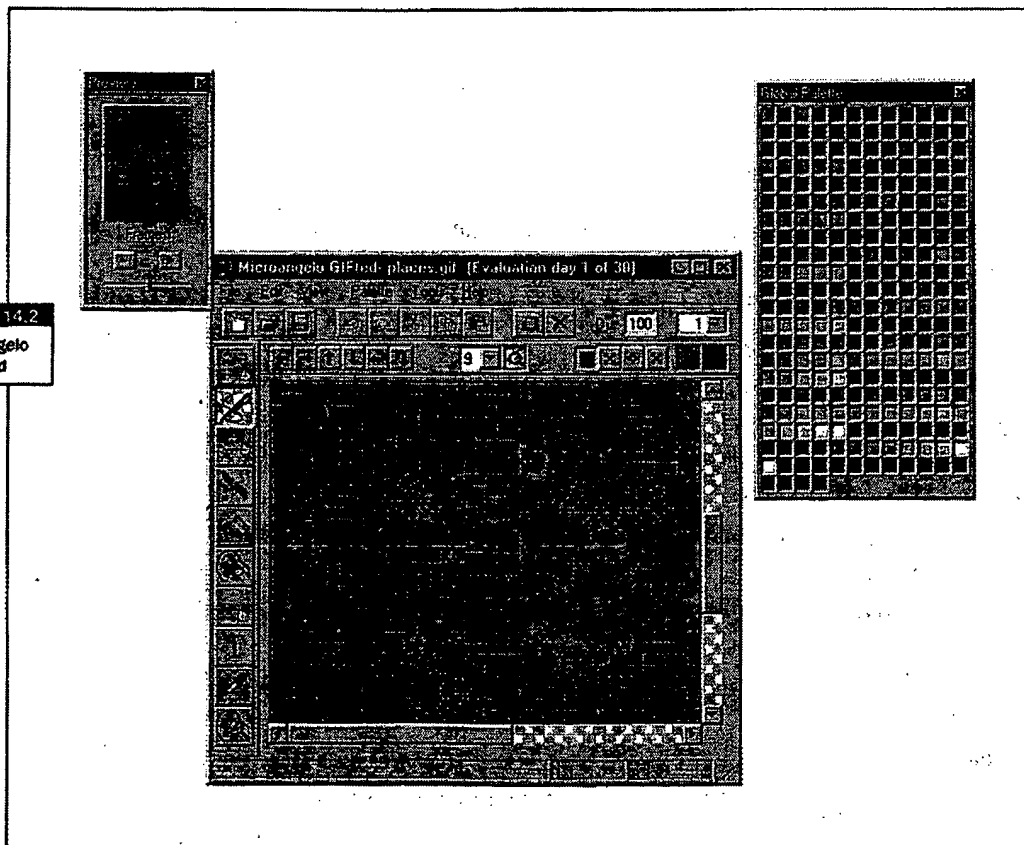
If you're a budding artist and want to try your hand at GIF animations, try a program like Microangelo GIFted (see figure 14.2), available on the Computer channel (keyword: **Computers**). It's inexpensive, easy to use, and even comes with a special QuickStart manual. The program also provides a large set of drawing and editing tools to create and change your artwork.

GIFted's main window is the drawing screen. Another window provides a selection of colors that can be blended and changed. And a Preview window shows the results of your work as they'll appear in the animation. You can play the animation in the Preview window as you complete the frames. Each animation frame is a separate GIF picture file.
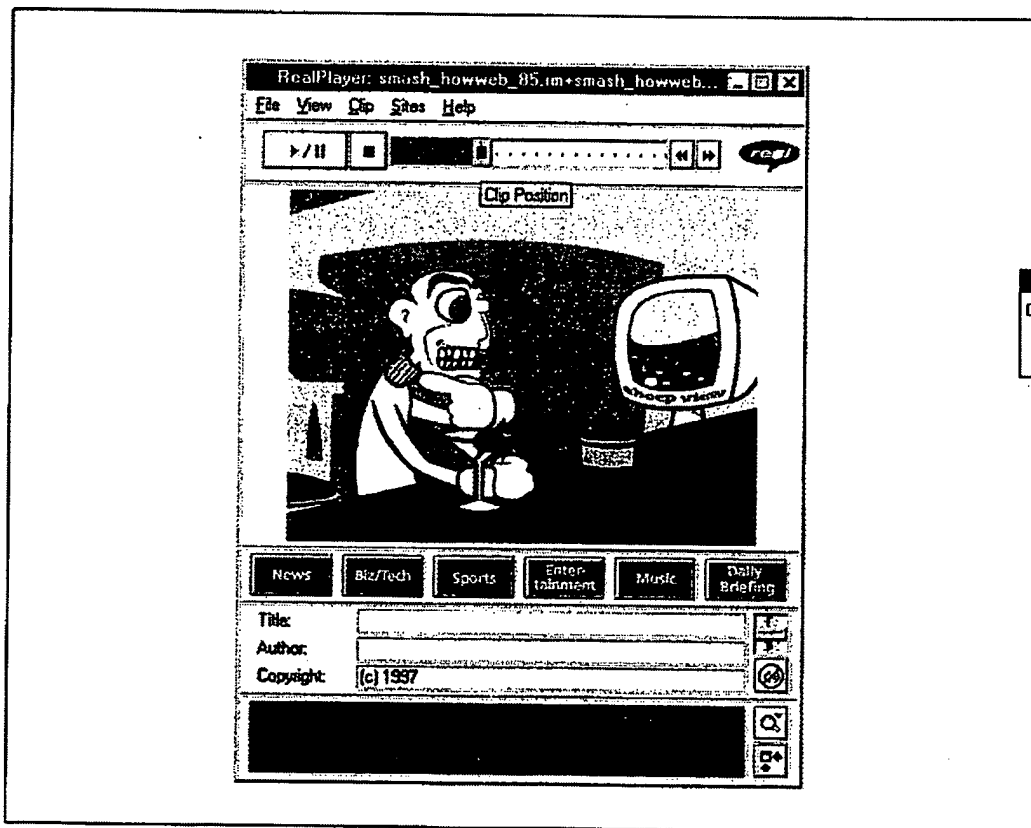
FIGURE 14.3

Download quickly with streaming technology

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Using Professional-Quality Multimedia Files

When the Web first became popular, starving artists and corporate CEOs alike got excited about the possibility of distributing multimedia via the Web. Alas, they ran into one major problem. High-end audio, video, and animation take forever to download. Even the smallest multimedia files are much larger than text and image files. Fortunately, RealNetworks has come up with a good solution: *streaming multimedia*. With streaming multimedia, the files play *while* they're downloading instead of only after they finish downloading. This makes it possible to distribute very large multimedia files over the AOL service and the Internet. In fact, RealNetworks has broadcast live audio and video concerts, games, and other events.

What do you need to enjoy streaming multimedia? The free RealPlayer, shown in figure 14.3. You can download the latest version of this, and other plug-ins, from the Multimedia Showcase (keyword: **Multimedia Showcase**).

Macromedia Shockwave and Flash Animations, Presentations, and Graphics

Shockwave is one of the most popular multimedia technologies on the Internet. In fact, it's so popular, it's included automatically with the Microsoft Internet Explorer Web browser, which is also part of the AOL 4.0 software. When Shockwave files are created, they're called "movies" because the software programs used to create them (such as Macromedia Director and Authorware) model the results after that popular format. Multimedia developers use the movies to create complex, informative—or simply entertaining—presentations, animations, and games. In addition, Shockwave can display digital pictures, illustrations, and layouts created with Macromedia's Freehand drawing program. Whenever you browse the Internet, there's a very good chance you'll run into Shockwave-produced animations on business Web pages.

Creating Shockwave Movies and Flash Animations

Creating Shockwave movies requires an investment of time, money, and training because Director and Authorware are costly and complex multimedia programs. But software programs like Macromedia Flash, on the other hand, make animating your digital pictures far more affordable and simple. Flash animations can also display in

the RealPlayer, if you want to stream them. For samples of Flash animations, visit the Multimedia Showcase (keyword: **Multimedia Showcase**)

Creating Your Own Multimedia Presentations

Multimedia professionals can surely knock your socks off with their high-budget productions. But let's say you and your band want to expand your exposure on the Web. You can post some of your songs and a video clip even if your budget hasn't hit the big time.

Creating your own RealMedia broadcasts or high-quality video or sound productions would require expensive audio and video equipment, technical expertise, and access to a RealNetworks server. And who's going to bother waiting for a 5 MB video to download? Fortunately, you can still use programs like HotDog Pro to add streaming multimedia to your Web site. It's an excellent Web page editor that costs about $100 and comes with a special RealMedia tool to convert AVI movies and WAV sound files to the RealPlayer format. While you won't get the professional quality you'll find on RealNetworks' Web site, it might be just what you need to get your gig in gear.

Online Audio

Of all the various multimedia elements we've just mentioned, sound is without a doubt the most popular. You'll have noticed by now that the AOL service uses sound as prompts, greetings, and notifications when you're online. Your Web browser supports most of the common sound file formats on the Web, including WAV, MIDI, and AU files. Sound is one of those things that everyone can play around with on their computer, even if they've never played a note of music in their lives. All you need is a sound card (most computers come with them these days). A microphone helps too.

The terms used in online audio can be confusing. There are four key things to keep in mind when you think about sound:

- The process of recording sound is usually referred to as *sampling*. Now, if someone ever runs this term by you again, you can act unimpressed and say, "So what? I know what *that* means!"

- When computers record and play sound, the measurement of quality is often called the *sampling rate*.

- How is the sampling rate determined? By using a simple measurement: *kilohertz*, indicating the rate of thousands of samples per second. For example, 11 kilohertz (kHz) refers to the fact that a sound was recorded or sampled at the rate of 11,000 times a second. If that sounds really fast, it is. However, it's not fast enough to create good sound files.

- Sound quality is also determined by something called *bit depth*. That is how many computer bits make up each of those samples per second! There are two settings: 8-bit and 16-bit. Sixteen-bit creates much better sound quality than 8-bit, but takes up twice as much space.

Eight-bit, 22 kHz sound files are typically used for games and online applications. Sixteen-bit, 44 kHz sound files offer CD-quality sound. If you want to record verbal greetings and notes for important data files you send to people (which you can very easily do), you'll very likely use the 8-bit, 22 kHz setting because it's economical yet produces listenable quality. Anything else is either too big or or too poor in quality to be practical when downloading or distributing sound files online.

When you bought your computer, it almost certainly came with a sound card or a sound chip built onto the motherboard. If that's the case, you'll also have received a microphone with your computer. That's really all you need to record your own audio files. If you would like a more in-depth discussion on how to do fun things with audio software, read Rich Grace's *The Sound and Music Workshop*. The AOL store has a good selection of the most popular sound cards from Voyetra, Creative Labs, and others (keyword **Hardware Center**; then select multimedia).

About MIDI

MIDI (musical instrument digital interface) sound files are the most suitable for representing music (as opposed to SoundBlaster-compatible files, which reproduce the blasts and explosions so popular in online games). The browser on the AOL service allows you to listen to any MIDI files you encounter on the AOL service on the

Internet. But if you're a musician, you might want to create your own. To get started, take a peek at the back of your computer, where you'll probably see a 15-pin connector (it's the one you use to connect your joystick). That connector also serves as a MIDI port.

With the right adapter you can hook up any MIDI instrument, such as a synthesizer keyboard or a guitar, to that sound card port on your computer. Then you can use the instrument to control and play sounds from the synthesizer chip on your sound card. It's that chip that determines how those songs are going to sound on your PC.

MIDI files are great for online applications because a typical three- or four-minute song only takes up about 50 K or 60 K of space. In contrast, a stereo CD quality sound file will eat up approximately 10 M of space. MIDI files also play automatically online, at CD-quality levels, if you've got the right plug-in software (discussed later in this chapter).

Recording Sounds

The quickest way to experiment with multimedia sound is to use the built-in Sound Recorder on Windows 95. To start it up, click the Start button, select Programs, then Accessories, Multimedia, and finally Sound Recorder (see figure 14.4). You'll have to load and play WAV files, because Sound Recorder won't play MIDI files.
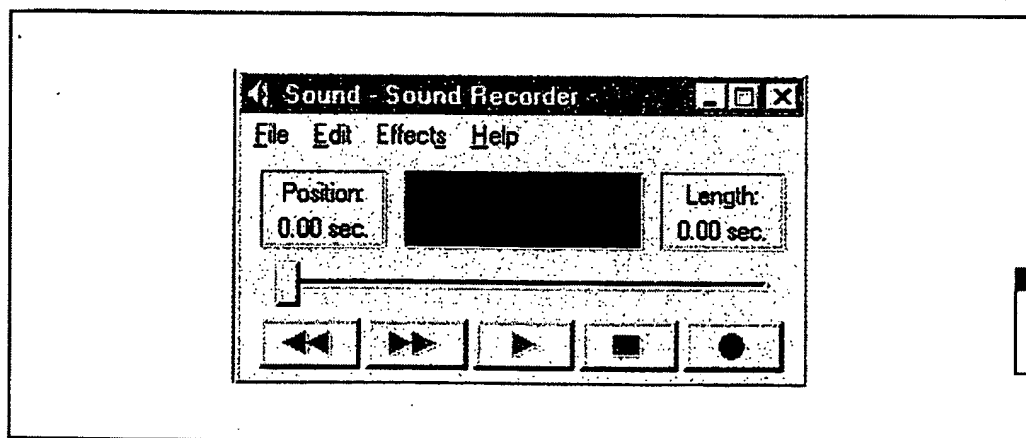
FIGURE 14.4
The Sound Recorder in Windows 95

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Assuming you have a microphone hooked up to your sound card and that everything else is set up properly:

1. Click on the record button (the one with the red dot).

2. When you're finished recording, click on the stop button (the one with the square).

3. Click on the seek to start button at the bottom left of the Sound Recorder to "rewind" the sound (the one with the two left-pointing arrows).

4. Click on the play button to listen to your creation (the one with the single right-pointing arrow).

5. To save your work, pull down the File menu and select Save.

FIGURE 14.5

CoolEdit
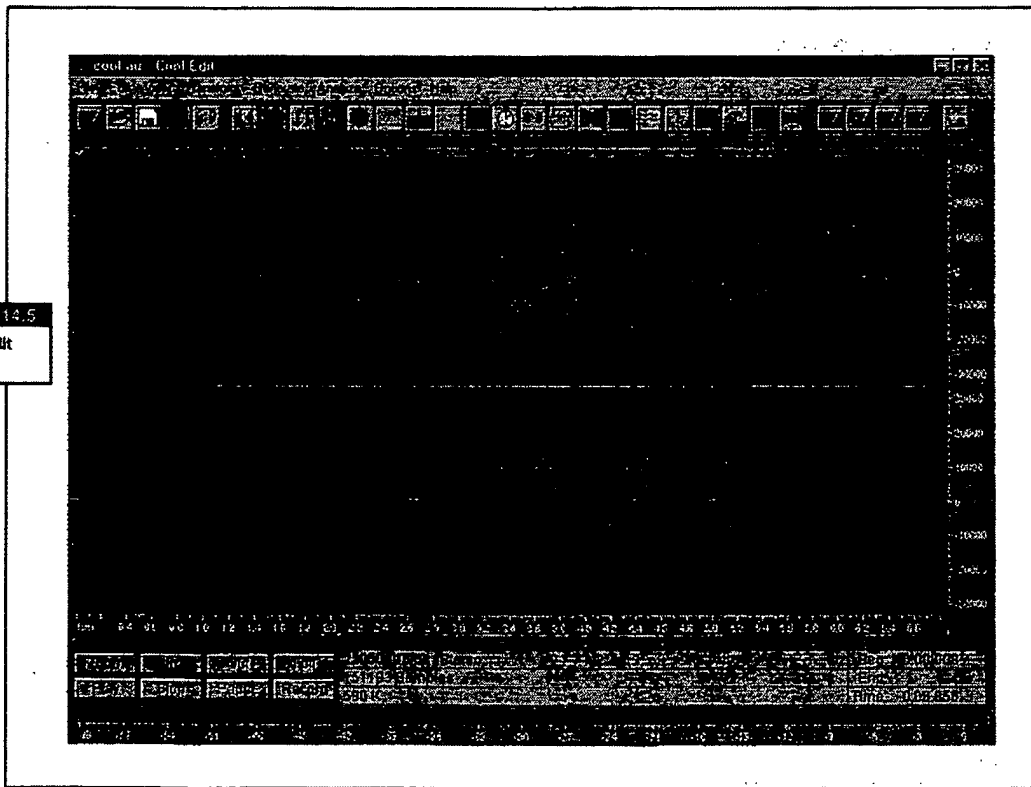
With Sound Recorder, you can:

- Insert a second sound file at any point in the currently loaded file.

- Copy the entire sound onto the Windows clipboard and then edit it or paste it into another program.

- Increase or decrease the volume of the sound.

- Increase or decrease the speed, or tempo, of the sound.

- Change the quality of the recorded sound if you need to save space (this is often called *downsampling*).

You have other options for editing and changing sounds besides the features offered in Windows. One of the best programs you can play around with is called CoolEdit (see figure 14.5). You can find it in the shareware library on the AOL service for about $50 (keyword: **software**), then search Shareware for CoolEdit.

CoolEdit will let you copy or cut and paste any part or all of a sound file into another—a great way to create something unique. You can also add dozens of different effects, including echo, reverb, distortion, amplifying, compression, and delay. You can even reduce the noise levels originally recorded into a sound file.

VDOLive, AVI, and QuickTime Videos

When surfing the Web, you'll frequently come across VDOLive, AVI, and Quick-Time videos. VDOLive is a plug-in offered by VDONet, a company specializing in streaming video broadcasting. As with RealPlayer, the VDOLive plug-in lets you view exciting, high-quality video clips and broadcasts without time-consuming downloads. And because both of these cutting-edge technologies come with your AOL browser, you'll never have to miss out on any broadcast. AVI movies are also popular on the Web. If you have a video camera and software like QuickCam, you can also create your own AVI movies and add them to your Web page.

Finally, there's QuickTime. QuickTime is an Apple multimedia technology that has been around for quite a while. Apple's superb multimedia extensions for Windows and Macintosh environments are used to play video and MIDI files, and help you turn your digital pictures into multimedia works of art. You can download the QuickTime plug-in from the Multimedia Showcase (keyword: **Multimedia Showcase**).

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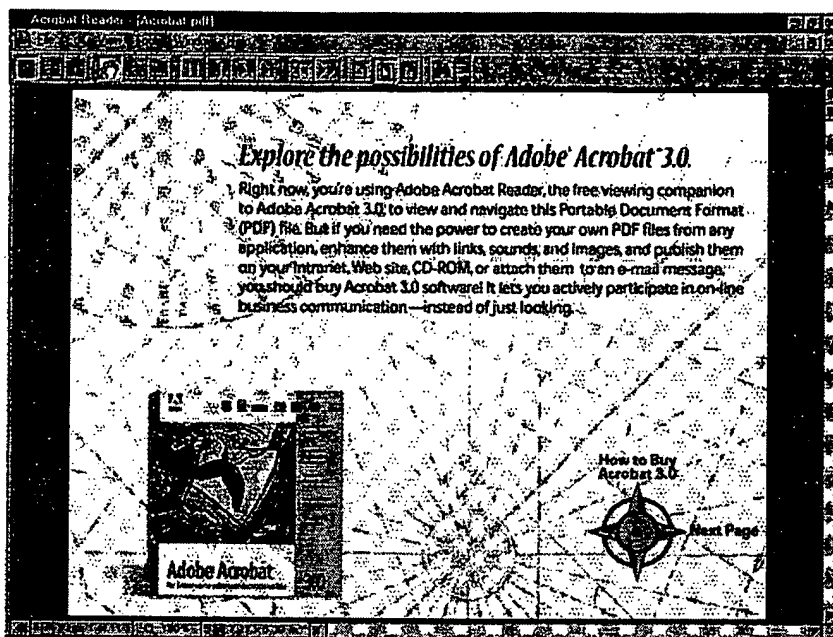
Using Your Digital Pictures in Documents Online

Does your business have a lot of brochures or other materials you'd like to distribute online? It can get a bit tricky because you want people to view your digital pictures and special fonts exactly the way you laid them out, even if they don't have the same fonts and programs you do.

Fortunately, many popular programs come with utilities that let other people view your files online—even if they don't have the same program. The ones you'll come across most frequently are files that require Microsoft Office Viewer plug-ins or Adobe Acrobat Reader.

If you use your digital pictures in Microsoft Office applications like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, you now have an easy way to let non–Microsoft Office users look at them. Microsoft offers free viewers from their Web site at http://www.microsoft. com so now you can send people the file with the viewer. You can also put your files on your Web page and provide a link to the viewer application. Of course, this still

doesn't solve the problem of fonts. But you can avoid problems by sticking with fonts that almost everyone has, like Arial and Times New Roman.

Adobe Acrobat is a lifesaver for people in the graphic arts community who put a lot of time and effort into creating their designs, choosing their fonts, and illustrating or photographing their digital pictures for the Web. The program, which costs about $500, enables users to convert documents and illustrations to a Portable Document Format (PDF) file. People who have neither the application the document was gen-
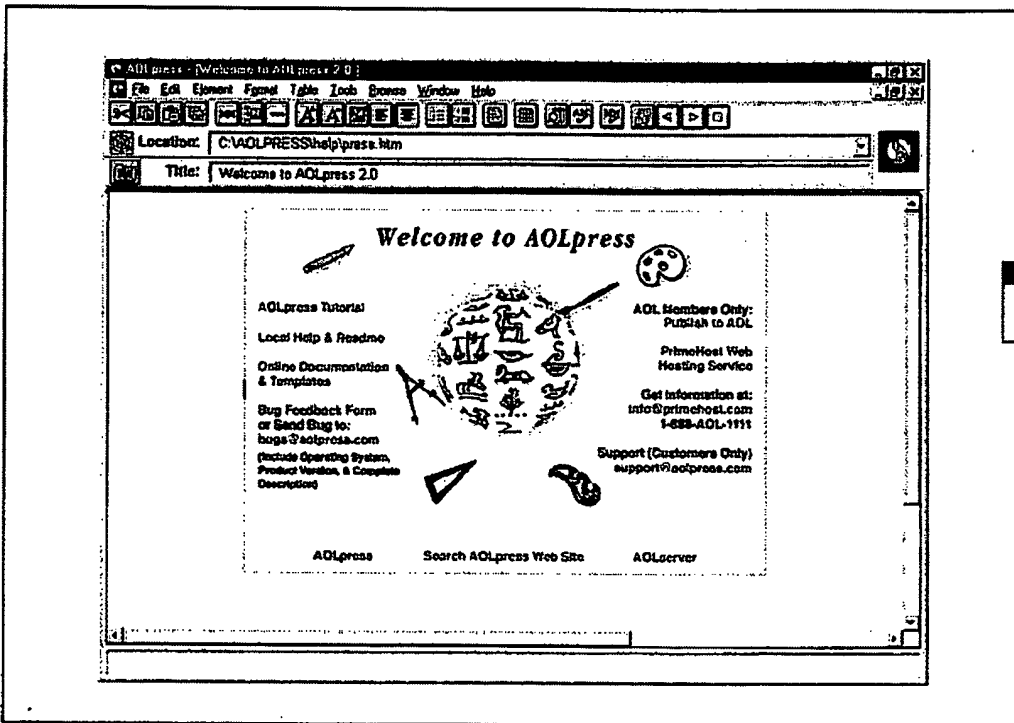
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erated on with the fonts, nor Acrobat, can download Acrobat Reader for free from Adobe's Web site (keyword: **Adobe**) and use it to view PDF files. In fact, if you visit the IRS online, you'll notice they've used Acrobat to format their downloadable tax forms!

When you click a link to download a PDF file, Acrobat Reader launches, as shown in figure 14.6. Its simple toolbar buttons and controls let you move backward and forward in the document and from page to page. It's a good idea to have this tool on your hard drive because Acrobat-formatted documents are widely available online

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and many companies offer downloadable documentation for their computer products in this format.

Bringing It All Together with AOLPress

Clearly, if you want to enhance your digital pictures with multimedia effects online, there's a broad range of possibilities. When you are ready to start creating sophisticated Web pages, turn to AOLPress, the freeware Web-page design tool on the AOL service (see figure 14.7). You can incorporate sound files, GIF animations, Flash animations, and QuickTime video.

AOLPress is a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) Web page editor that makes combining special effects with your digital pictures as easy as using a standard word processing, graphics, or presentation program. You can also add features like GIF animations, Acrobat documents, Shockwave movies, and RealPlayer objects such as Flash animations to your Web pages. If ever there was a place to be creative, this is it!

Step 3: Add Your Digital Pictures

Once you set up your page and add your text, Personal Publisher tells you exactly how to insert digital pictures into your page. You can use a drawing—like a logo or a cartoon—or a photograph that users can click on to visit another Web page. Or turn your digital picture into an image map: visitors can click on parts of image maps to jump to other locations. For example, clicking on your picture of a kangaroo could bring them to your funny description of seeing one for the first time.

To add a digital picture:

1. When the digital picture options appear, as shown in figure 7.3, click on Get My Picture to insert digital art from your own collection. Or click on Get Clip Art to insert digital art supplied by the AOL service.

2. When the Picture Gallery appears, select a digital picture to place on the page from the thumbnails that appear.

3. If you choose Advanced Options, you can also turn your picture into a link. Click on Link. When the Choose Links dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 7.4, select an option and click on OK. You can opt to link the entire picture, or create an image map by linking sections of the picture.
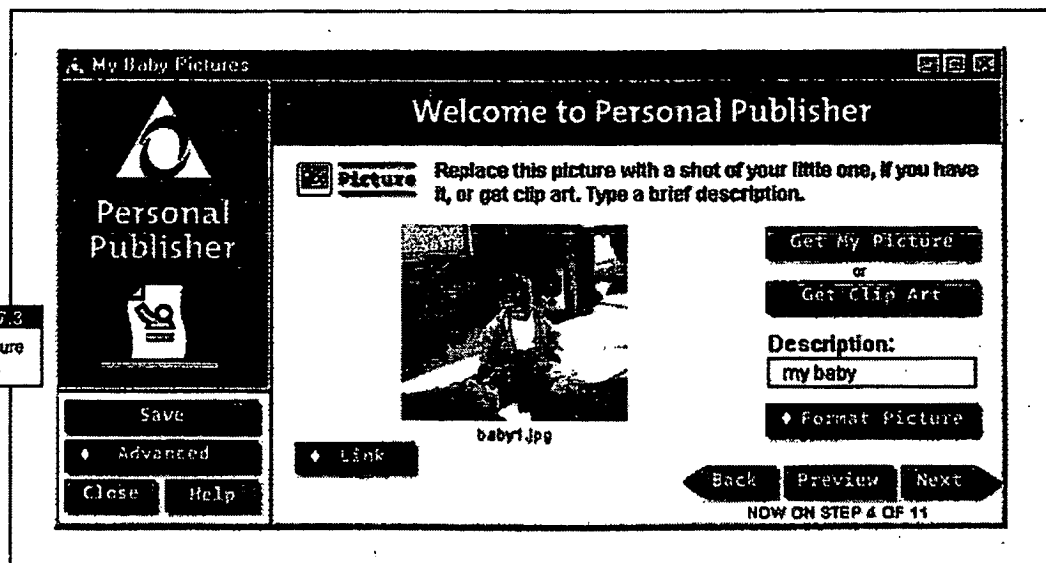
FIGURE 7.3
Digital picture options

YOU'VE GOT PICTURES! AOL'S GUIDE TO DIGITAL IMAGING
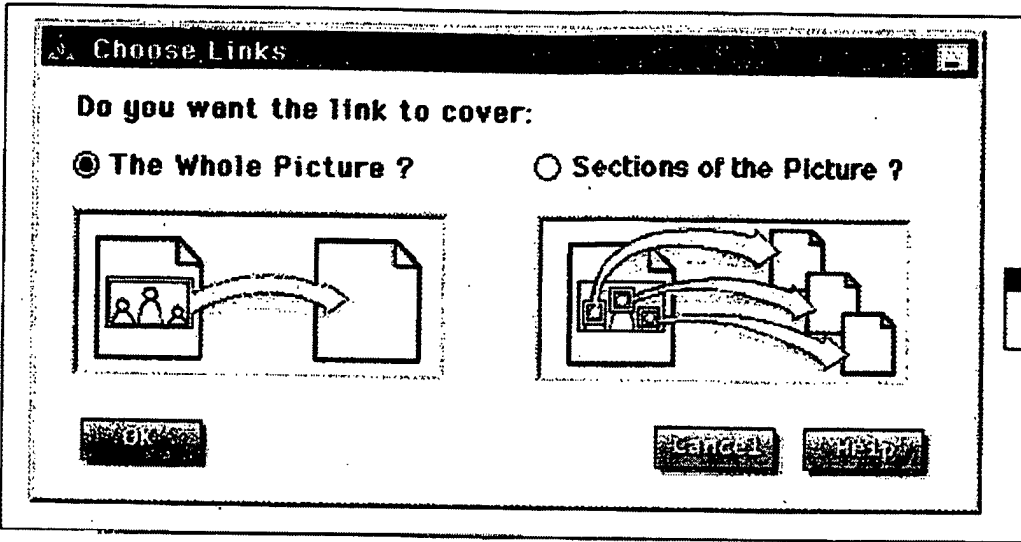
FIGURE 7.4
Choose Links
dialogue box

4. If you choose to link the entire picture, you will be asked to select a destination address from a number of options. You can also type an address. If you choose to create an image map, Personal Publisher helps you draw boxes around the sections you want to link, name the sections, and enter the address the link will take you to. Don't worry, the selection boxes you create won't appear in the image file or on the Web page.
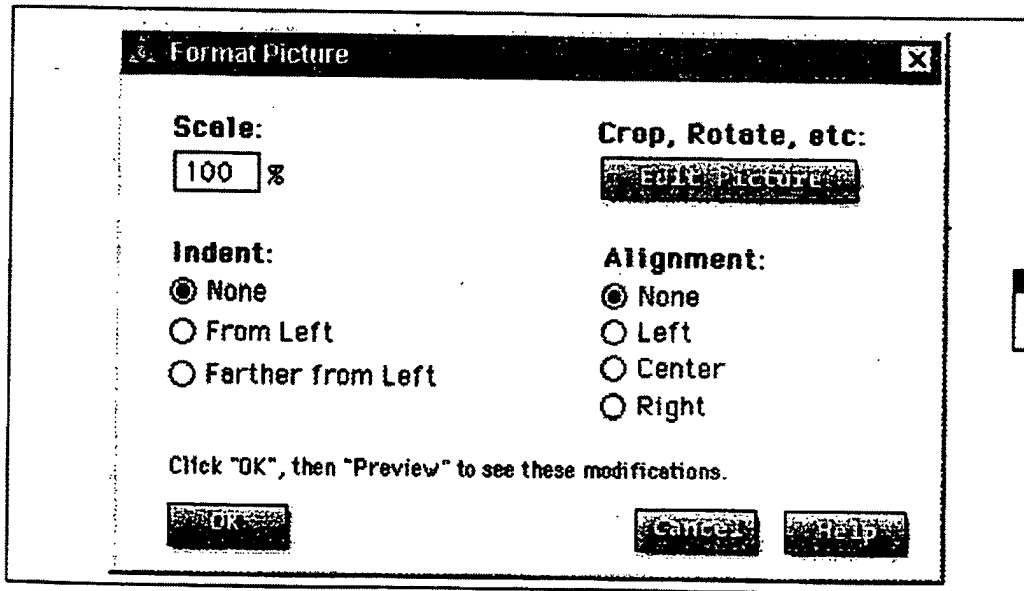
FIGURE 7.5
Format Picture
dialogue box

5. Edit your digital pictures and position them on the page by clicking on Format. When the Format Picture dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 7.5, opt to resize your picture (by entering a percentage in the Scale text field), edit your picture (by clicking on Edit Picture), or reposition the picture (by selecting options from the Indent or Alignment buttons). When you are finished editing and positioning your picture, click on OK.

6. Give your picture a name (use the default that's given, or assign your own name).

Do you like the way your pictures look? If so, several templates allow you to add more text and create links by clicking on Next to move on to the next step. You can click on Preview at any time to see how your Web page is coming along. If you need to make changes, click on Back.

Step 4: Make Links

You probably have some favorite links you want to include. If you're in advanced mode, a "links button" may appear that allows you to create a hyperlink from text or

FIGURE 7.6
Link Choices
dialogue box
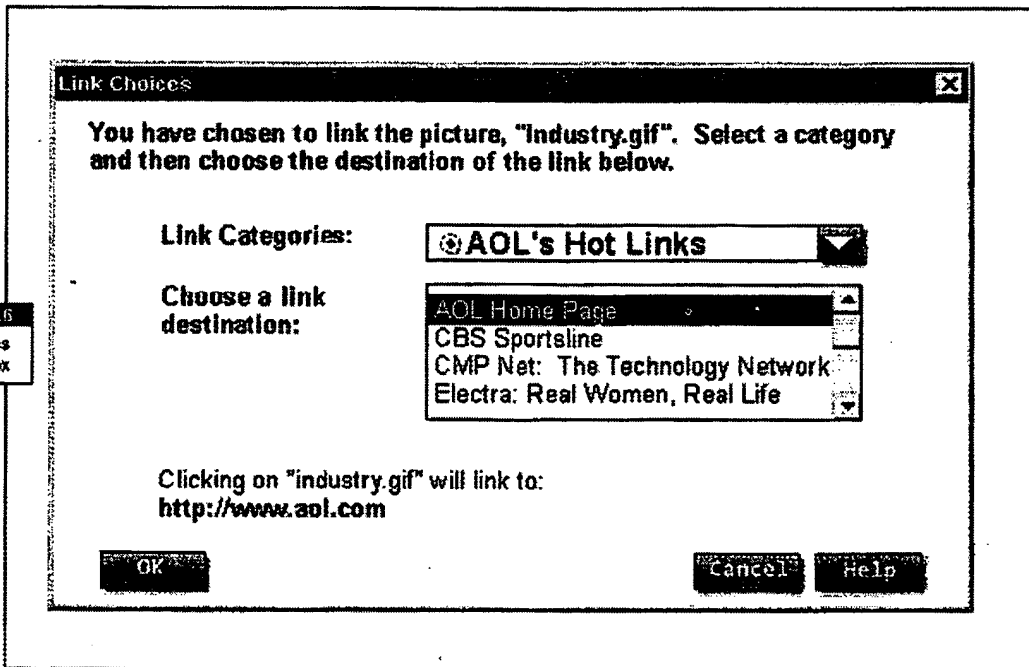
pictures to another site. These links can jump visitors to your friends' pages, favorite Web sites, or resources on a topic of interest. Creating links is as easy as selecting text or a picture; just click on Add Link and select options from the Link Choices dialogue box (shown in figure 7.6). When you select a link category from the drop-down list, a list of link locations appears below. Hot Spots are AOL-recommended links. My Other Places are links to pages on your own Web site. The Within This Page option helps you create several links to different places on the same Web page. When you select a type of link, a list of your Favorites or available Web pages on your site displays. You can also link to places and files that don't appear on any of the lists by selecting the Type a URL option and entering a URL or filename manually.

To make links:

1. Select text or a picture, then click on the Add button.

2. When the Link Choices dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 7.6, choose the type of link you want to create from the Select a link category: pull-down list, then select a page from the list below.

3. Click on OK.

4. Repeat steps 1 to 3 until you've added all your links.

5. To remove a link, select the linked item and click on Delete.
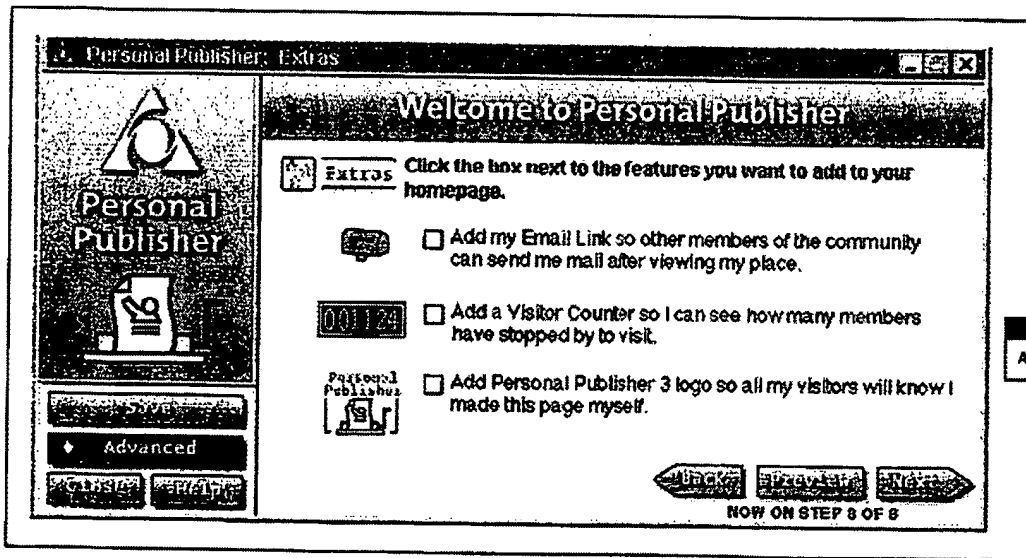
FIGURE 7.7
Added features

CREATING WEB PAGES WITH PERSONAL PUBLISHER

Step 5: Add Features

Now you're almost finished. Personal Publisher's final screen displays a list of features you can add to your Web page. You can make a link to your e-mail address, add a counter that keeps track of the number of visitors to your Web page, or add a logo telling everyone you created your page with Personal Publisher. To select options, click on the appropriate check box. Figure 7.7 shows you the added features you can include on your Web page.

- **E-mail Link.** When you click on the box to add your e-mail link, visitors to your page can e-mail you straight from your Web page. When they click on your link, a message composition window appears with your address entered so they can write a message and send it to you.

- **Visitor Counter.** By checking the Add Visitor Counter check box, you can show off how many people have visited your site. Personal Publisher adds a digital counter that displays on your Web page.

When you're finished selecting options, click on Done. Personal Publisher then asks you to save the file and give it a filename. Name your file (the default is "index.html") and save it to your Web folder containing your images and other files. (Hint: If you have several pages, you will want to be more descriptive. But make sure you finish with ".html") Now you can upload your Web page and associated files to the AOL server.

Publishing Your Web Page

You've designed your Web page, checked it twice, and made it perfect. It's time to upload it to the World Wide Web. Personal Publisher makes it easy for you. AOL has reserved 10 megabytes of Web site storage space for each account (2 megabytes per screen name). Use this space to put your Web page on the Internet, or offer files others can download.

To upload a Web page to the AOL server, do the following:

1. When the Congratulations! screen appears as shown in figure 7.8, click on Publish.

2. When Personal Publisher asks you to give your Web page a filename, enter the same filename again, and click on the Publish button.

Your Web page is then stored on AOL's server. To get to it, use keyword **My Place.**
Your Web address will be: http://members.aol.com/yourscreenname/index.html.

Editing Your Web Page

You can edit any item on your Web page by clicking on the Edit Item button (see figure 7.9). But suppose your already-published Web page announces a new arrival to your family...who is now almost a year old. Or everyone loves your festive New Year's page, but as July approaches it begins to seem a bit peculiar. Personal Publisher's site management features make managing your Web site easy. You can add and remove pages from the AOL server, preview unpublished pages, and link pages together. To begin managing your pages, open Personal Publisher and click on the Manage Your Pages button. When the page management options appear, as shown in figure 7.10, you can select options.

The window displays two lists. One list shows the pages you have published on AOL, and the other list shows unpublished files on your computer. You can choose what kind of files to display (such as HTML documents or images) by selecting an option from the Show drop-down list.

Here's everything you can do using Personal Publisher's site management features:

- **Publish and remove pages.** To publish a page from your computer to the AOL server, select a page from the Unpublished Pages on the Your Computer list and click on the Publish button. To remove a page from the

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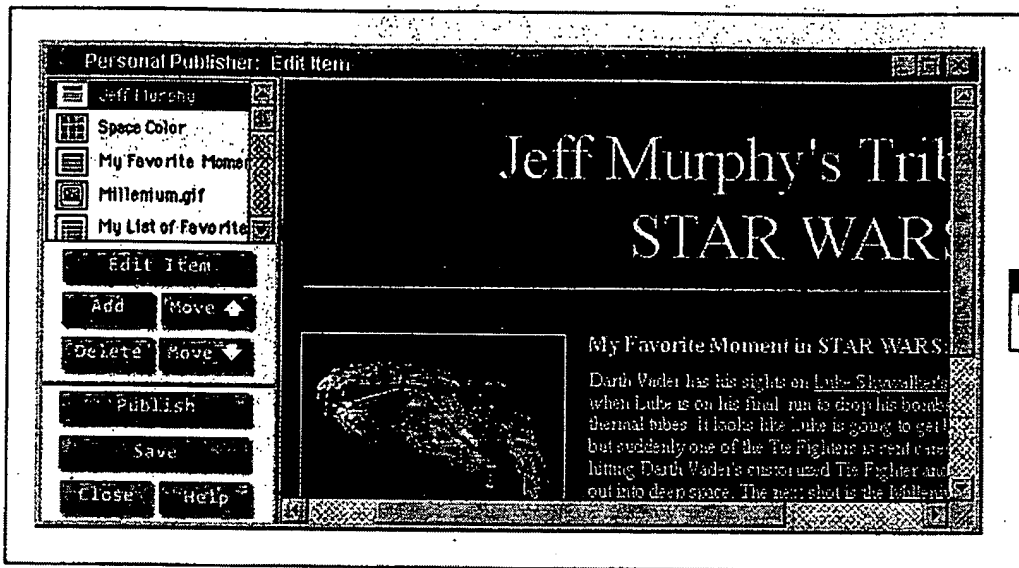
FIGURE 7.9

Editing your Web page

server and place it on your "Unpublished Pages on the Your Computer" list, select an item from the "Your Published Web Pages on AOL" list and click on the Unpublish button.

- **Preview pages.** To preview unpublished pages, select an item from one of the lists and click on the Preview button.

- **Edit pages.** To edit a page, select an item from a list and click on the Edit button. Personal Publisher launches and displays the page for you so you can change, add, edit, and delete items.

- **Options/Menu.** You can link all of your pages together by creating a list of all links at the bottom of each Web page. To create a list of links, click on the Options button, then select the Menu option. This makes it easier for visitors to find all of your Web pages.

- **Options/Browse.** The Browse option lets you add HTML documents you've created with other Web page authoring tools to your directory of unpublished Web pages. From there you can publish them to your Web site. To add your Web pages, click on the Options button, select Browse, then select the ones you want to add to your site. Make sure these files are
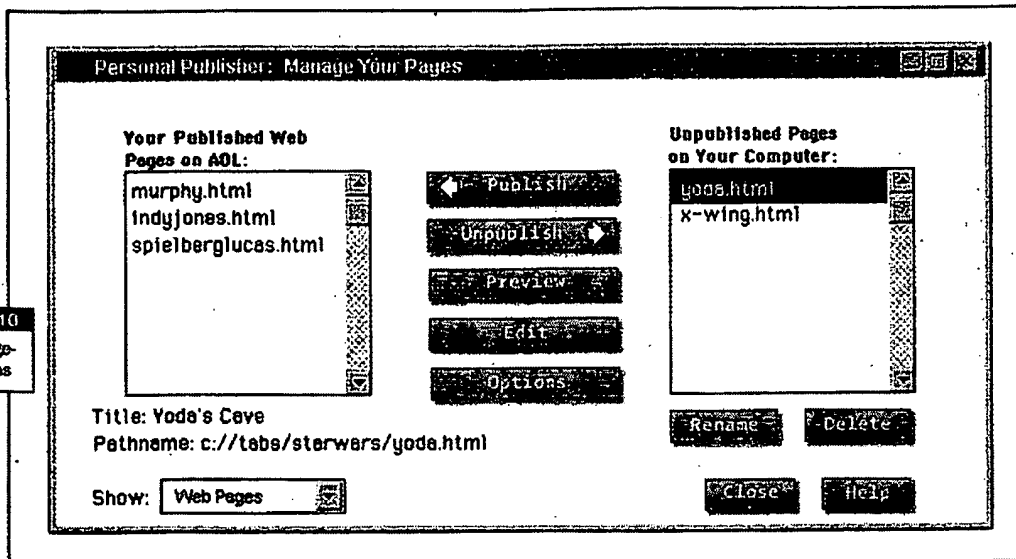
FIGURE 7.10
Page manage-
ment options

Personal Publisher: Manage Your Pages

**Your Published Web
Pages on AOL:**

murphy.html
indyjones.html
spielberglucas.html

Publish

Unpublish

Preview

Edit

Options

**Unpublished Pages
on Your Computer:**

yoda.html
x-wing.html

Rename   Delete

Title: Yoda's Cave
Pathname: c://tabs/starwars/yoda.html

Show: Web Pages

Close   Help

stored in the same Web directory as your Personal Publisher pages. Oth-
erwise, the internal links might not work.

- **Options/FTP.** The FTP option lets you upload files from any directory on
  your computer to your Web site space at My Place (keyword: **My Place**).
  To enable your FTP option, click on the Options button, then select FTP.
  You need to go online before you can upload FTP files.

Adding Multimedia

You don't need a lot of technical knowledge or expensive equipment to spice up your
Web pages with a little multimedia. Animation, video, and sound make your Web
site great entertainment for your visitors. Create your own multimedia files or use
existing files from the AOL service. Note: New features are added periodically, so be
sure to check the help areas within Personal Publisher for the latest information.

Here are just a few ideas for how you can add multimedia elements to your Web site:

- **Interactive movie reviews.** If you love movies and want to review them on
  your Web page, you can become an online Siskel and Ebert.

- **Start an online music 'zine.** AOL abounds with music clips for just about
  every musical taste. Give your readers an earful of the bands or musical

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groups you write about by including sound clips with your reviews and articles. Check out the PC Music and Sound Forum at keyword **PC Music**.

- **Animate your pages.** GIF animations are easy to create and they liven up your pages. You can build a mini-cartoon with an action sequence or flash favorite pictures. Find out more at the PC Graphic Arts Forum (keyword: **PGR**).

- **Multimedia biography.** Record favorite moments—like Jenny's first words or Johnny's first steps—and add them to your Web page for less money and effort than you might think.

If you use other people's files on your pages, give the author credit on your page and a link to their Web page or e-mail address. In addition, *unless the Web page or area where you got the file explicitly gives visitors permission to use files, e-mail the author for permission.*

For more information and ideas about working with multimedia, see chapter 6.

Animated GIFs

You've probably seen Web pages featuring playful kittens scampering across the screen, e-mail links with mailboxes that open and close, and digital pictures that change every few seconds. But did you know that these are GIF animations, and you can easily create and add your own to your Web pages? GIF animations are like traditional cell animations or cartoons. First, you create or gather the digital

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pictures you want to use and convert them to GIF files with a program like PaintShop Pro or NeoPaint. Then you assemble your animation in a program like GIF Construction Set. GIF Construction Set's user-friendly Animation Wizard guides you through the steps. You can then use the program's preview feature to view your animation and make sure it looks right.

When you finish creating an animation file, save it to your Web folder with the GIF filename extension and insert it into your Web page the same way you would insert an ordinary GIF or JPEG image. To download the software you need, visit the Download Software area (keyword: **Software**). You can also visit the PC Graphic Arts Forum (keyword: **PGR**) for samples, help, and animated GIF-related information.

Adding Sound and Video

Adding sound and video to your Web pages is easy and fun. You can download audio and video files or create them yourself. Chapter 6 suggests inexpensive hardware and software to purchase. There are also software programs you can use to transform digital pictures into video presentations. Once you have your multimedia files, you can add them to your page by making a link to them. When a visitor clicks on your link, the appropriate application launches and plays back the file. To link to a multimedia file, place the file in your Web site folder, then create the link in Personal Publisher as you normally would. Make sure to select the Type a URL linking option. When the dialogue box appears, you can enter the filename of your multimedia file.

If you're willing to learn a little more about Web page authoring, you can also easily add a background sound to your page, or embed an AVI movie in your page that automatically plays when the page loads. To add these features, you'll need to open your HTML file in NotePad (the text editor that comes with Windows 95) and enter a line or two of HTML source code yourself. Fortunately, HTML is easy to learn and you can find plenty of online resources to help you get the hang of it. The AOL Store also offers books on the subject.

- **Adding a background sound.** You can add a sound track that will automatically play when people visit your page. To add a background sound to your Web page, open your HTML document and enter the following source code: `<BGSOUND SRC • "sound.wav" LOOP • 5>`. This tells the browser to play a background sound, and specifies the name of the sound

file and how many times the sound file should play before it stops. Place the sound file in the same folder as your HTML document.

- **Adding a background video.** A background video appears on your page like an image and begins playing. To add a background video enter the following source code in your document: **img dynsrc • "movie.avi" width • "160" height • "120" start• "fileopen" controls.** This tells the browser to play a background video, and specifies the name of the movie. In addition, it specifies the height and width of the movie in pixels (the unit of measurement on the Web), and tells the movie to launch when the Web page is opened and to display the movie player controls. Movies on the Internet always measure either 160 x 120 pixels or 320 x 240 pixels. You can place the AVI movie in the same folder as your HTML files.

Before you add multimedia to your Web site, remember that sound and video files are fairly large—they can fill up your personal Web space pretty quickly, and can also take time for visitors to download. To learn more about HTML, the Web, and how it all works, see the "Web Page Help and Resources" section later in this chapter.

Multimedia File Formats

You've probably already noticed that AOL abounds with all different kinds of multimedia files. But what are they, how do they work, and what do you need to play them? You may never have to answer these questions. Just about everything you need has been built into your browser, so you can sit back and enjoy the experience. Or, you can easily find what you need at the Multimedia showcase (keyword: **mm showcase**). However, knowing how multimedia works online can help you make better use of it. Some types of files can be handled directly by the browser. Others require plug-ins or ActiveX controls—small programs that extend your browser's capabilities and enable it to handle different kinds of files.

Listed below are the most popular types of multimedia files and the plug-ins or active controls required to play them.

- **WAV.** A basic Windows sound file format. You can play back WAV files with the Media Player application that comes with Windows 95.

- **AVI.** A basic Windows video file format. You can play back AVI movies with the Media Player application that comes with Windows 95.

- **VDOLive.** VDONet's software and video file format lets multimedia developers deliver high-quality videos and broadcasts online. You can play back VDONet videos using VDOLive.

- **RealPlayer.** This Progressive Networks technology lets multimedia developers broadcast video and audio over the Web. You can play these broadcasts with RealPlayer.

- **Shockwave Flash.** With this application you can view exciting multimedia presentations, games, demonstrations, and movies created with Macromedia's high-end multimedia applications like Director and Author Ware.

Most people have to download and install plug-ins and ActiveX controls themselves. Fortunately, AOL comes with the most popular ones already installed.

Web Page Help and Resources

Personal Publisher gives you a great way to get started with Web publishing. But where do you go when you want to add more features to your Web site? Online, of course. AOL abounds with areas that discuss sound, video, multimedia, graphics,

FIGURE 7.11
Multimedia
Showcase

CREATING WEB PAGES WITH PERSONAL PUBLISHER

digital pictures, and desktop publishing. You'll find information, examples, and tutorials, along with experts ready to give you help and advice.

Here are a few places you can visit for information about Web publishing, digital pictures, and multimedia:

- **On the Net.** If you're looking for classes and tools and a good all-purpose resource, try keyword **On the Net.**

- **The Sound Room.** Enter the keyword **Sound Room** to access entire libraries full of sound files and information that you can download, listen to, and use. A built-in sound player lets you listen to files online before you download them.

- **Desktop Cinema.** Browse through the video libraries and find exciting videos for your Web site. The area also has a built-in video player so you can view the movies online. Enter the keyword **Sound Room** and click on Desktop Cinema.

- **Multimedia Showcase.** Visit this multimedia mecca for information, downloadable files, contests, creative inspiration, featured sites, and more. Enter the keyword **mm showcase**, or visit the Web page shown in figure 7.11 (http://multimedia.aol.com).

- **Web Page Clip Art Creation Center.** Learn about how to create and format artwork for your Web pages, including background textures, animated GIFs, and more. The Web Page Clip Art Creation Center (keyword: **Webart**) guides you to resources and artwork you can use.

- **Desktop and Web Publishing forum.** Aspiring Web publishers can find lots of useful resources from this forum (keyword: **MDWP**), including HTML support and downloadable fonts.

Use these resources to find just the right sound clip, video file, or clip art for your Web page, or learn about exciting new things you can do to enhance your Web pages.

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KIDS AND DIGITAL PICTURES

Now that you're becoming a digital pictures expert, you can start encouraging your children to use them too. Kids have lots of creativity, and digital pictures can help them bring their ideas to life. They can dress up school reports with photographs, maps, and works of art; create official-looking ID cards for clubs and school activities; publish their own Web page or newsletter; create greeting cards for birthdays and holidays. They can also meet other creative kids online and learn from them, and access a multitude of online resources for their projects.

This chapter describes online places where kids can go for fun, education, ideas, and encouragement—and how you can help keep them out of trouble. Then, the chapter introduces you to some fun and educational projects that can keep your kids happily busy.

Here are a few ways that your kids can use digital pictures:

- **Researching school reports.** Digital pictures can make your children more interested in schoolwork, while making their schoolwork more interesting. Your children can find a wealth of information and pictures on the AOL service that they won't find in their textbook.

- **Entering contests.** Does Tracy get in trouble for doodling in class? Encourage her to enter an online art contest. Blackberry Creek (keyword: **Blackberry**) and other areas invite your children to submit artwork, scrapbooks, and photographs for contests on a regular basis, and show the winners' work online.

- **Making new friends.** Communicating online brings back many of the old-fashioned pleasures of letter writing. If Michael seems shy around people, encourage him to make friends online. He can correspond with kids from around the world, meet other kids who share the same interests and concerns, and exchange digital pictures with them.

- **Helping others.** Does Susie talk about the environment a lot? Does Frank constantly nag you to quit smoking? Does Jeannie ask questions about homeless people every time you take her to the city? Many of today's kids are concerned about social issues. They can go online to learn more and find out how they can help, or create a Web page with digital pictures to voice their concerns and encourage other people to think about them.

- **Creating special projects.** Creative kids sometimes have trouble finishing projects when they don't turn out the way they imagined them. With digital pictures and today's software, it's easy for kids to create slick-looking newsletters, greeting cards, Web pages, and just about anything they can think of.

Protecting Your Kids Online

Sure you want your kids to have fun on AOL and the Internet, and to use their resources for school and creative projects. But like many parents, you may be concerned about the possibility that they might be exposed to unsuitable material. Fortunately, there are plenty of places online that are geared especially to children's interests and needs. For example, the Kids Only channel (keyword: **Kids Only**), shown in figure 8.1, offers a variety of activities and material especially for kids.

In addition, you can use AOL's built-in Parental Controls to limit your children's online access to areas appropriate for their age group and your family's values. The Parental Controls features let you select options for what types of sites your kids can access, and who they can communicate with. Depending on your children's age and maturity, you can customize your Parental Controls settings so that you can, for example, allow your teenager more freedom than you allow your first-grader. If you'd like to see exactly what your children will experience while they're online, log on as one of your children, then try to access sites and surf the Web.

FIGURE 8.1

Kids Only

KIDS AND DIGITAL PICTURES
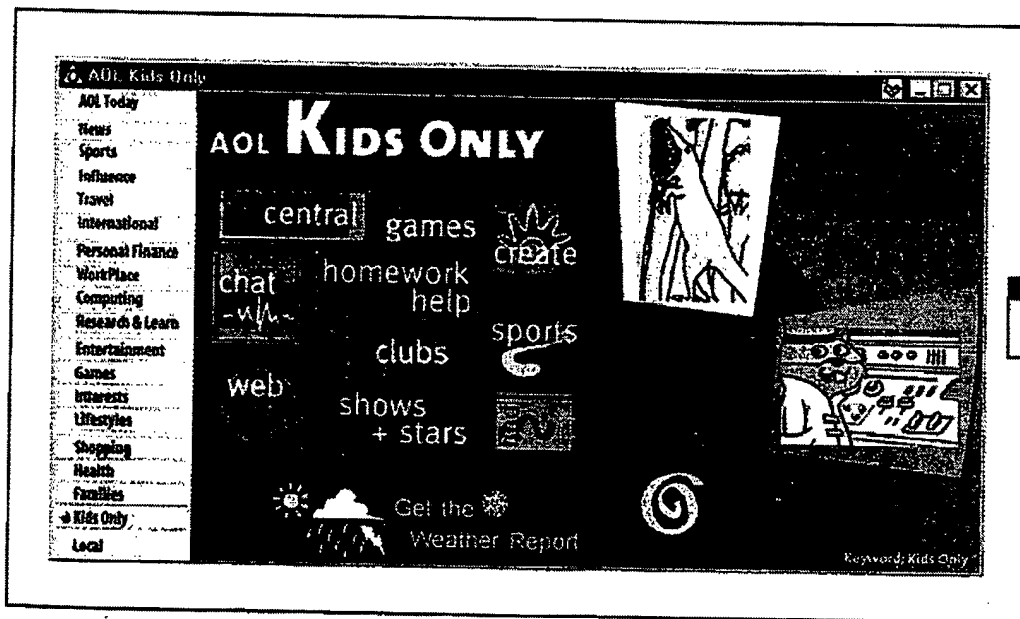
To set Parental Controls:

1. Click on the My AOL toolbar button and select Parental Controls from the list.

2. When the Parental Controls dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 8.2, click on Create a Screen Name to display options for setting up screen names for each member of your family.

3. When you finish creating screen names, return to the Parental Controls dialogue box. A list of screen names appears on the Secondary accounts list.

4. Select a screen name and click on the Custom Controls button.

5. When the Custom Controls dialogue box appears, as shown in figure 8.3, specify Web controls by selecting an item from the list, reading the explanation and instructions in the scrolling text area, and clicking on the Web Controls button.

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FIGURE 8.2
Parental Controls
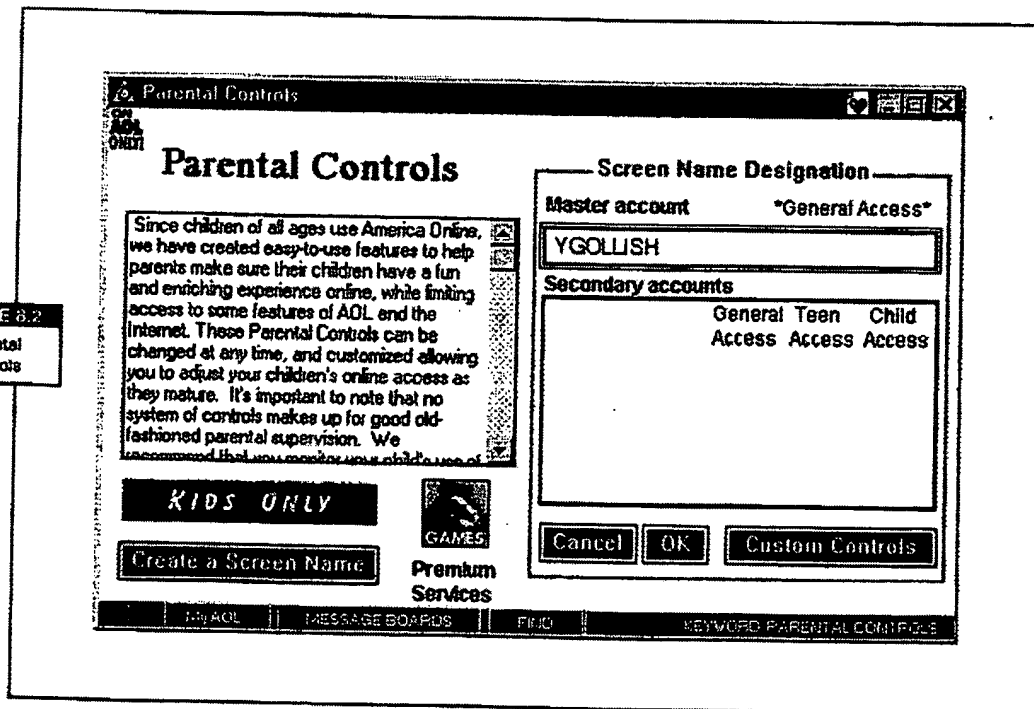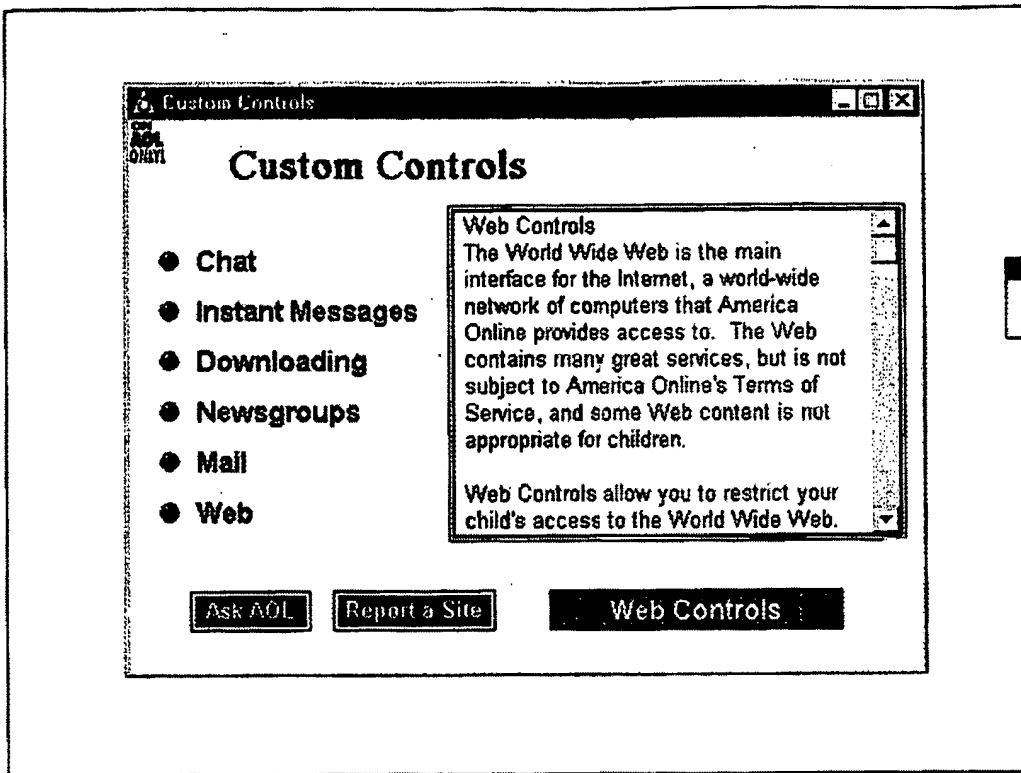
(Note: Although the 4.0 software was being finalized as we wrote this, AOL had planned to include a Parental Controls button right on the Welcome screen.)

Once you've set your Parental Controls, you can feel reasonably secure about your children's online journeys. However, it is also important for you to talk with your children about online safety—just as you tell them to look both ways when crossing the street on the way to school. Talking to them about their online safety is as important as talking to them about their safety in the real world. Encourage them to ask questions and to talk to you if they encounter anything that makes them feel funny or uncomfortable. If you're not sure where to begin, take a look at the safety tips in the Kids Only area. Be sure to warn them *never* to give out personal information, like your address, to people they meet online.

With all that said, most kids have positive online experiences, and get a lot out of using the AOL service and participating in its communities.

KIDS AND DIGITAL PICTURES

A SUMMARY OF SAFETY TIPS FOR KIDS

There are many wolves and traps lurking online for children. Following are some safety tips you can discuss with your children and post for them to see when they are online.

1. Never give your AOL or other password to anyone. Don't even give your password to a friend or someone who says he is from AOL and needs your password.

2. Do not tell anyone your home address or phone number. If you want to give your address to a friend online, ask a parent's permission first.

3. Never agree to meet with anyone in person. If someone asks to meet you, tell a parent and ask permission.

4. Anytime you feel threatened, funny, or uncomfortable about anything someone does or says online, tell your parents. If someone uses threatening or bad language with you, tell your parents. Remember, you have the option of turning the computer *off* if you feel uncomfortable.

5. If anyone uses bad language or makes you feel unsafe while you're online, call a guide. Use the keyword **KO Help** to notify a guide and tell her what happened. You can also leave the chat room where the offending person is or sign off the AOL service altogether.

6. Never accept anything from a stranger. This includes files, Web page addresses or URLs, or e-mail.

Activities and Projects for Kids

Before you begin trying to teach your children how to use a computer, watch out! They might already know more than you. Today's kids often learn how to use computers at school at an early age. Whether Johnny's a junior computer whiz or doesn't know a keyboard from a key ring, you can still encourage him to use digital pictures and online resources productively. The following sections suggest a few projects and offer tips and suggestions for keeping your children challenged and busy.

Some children may seem overwhelmed or reluctant at first. You can get them excited by going online and showing them projects that other kids have created. Or try

brainstorming with them to come up with a few ideas, and then narrow the list. You can start off with something small, like a Mother's Day card for Grandma.

A final word of advice: don't let your expectations ruin the fun. Sure, you'd like Alex to get cracking on that school report. But if he would rather design a Michael Jordan Web page, let him. As he gets used to working with digital pictures and sees all the neat things he can do with them, he'll start using them for homework too.

Creating Web Pages

Your children may look over your shoulder while you create your Web page—or even help you and make suggestions. They probably want to create a home page of their own. After all, many of their friends have Web pages. With AOL, each member of your family, including the dog, can have his own Web site. Your account gives you 10 MB of personal Web page space that can be distributed into individual 2 MB areas for each screen name in your family.

Your children are probably bursting with ideas about what they want to include on their Web page and how they want their page to look. Sit down with them, help them plan out their page, and show them other kids' Web sites to give them more ideas. You can also help them gather digital pictures and explain how to use the Picture Gallery. If Lisa likes horses, encourage her to do a little research and create an interesting and visually appealing page about horses. If Jimmy likes to go fishing with Dad, help him pick out pictures and write up some fun fishing stories and add fish-related trivia.

Posting Artwork Online

Kids always seem to be drawing, writing stories, building models, or working on crafts. Sometimes they start these projects in school, sometimes they dream things up on their own. No matter where the ideas come from, kids enjoy showing people their creations. Kids Only has several places where kids can display their masterpieces for other kids to see. Blackberry Creek also frequently requests projects from children, and sponsors contests with prizes.

Help your children come up with ideas for things they can create and display as artwork in one of these Kids Only areas. Kids can use the image programs discussed in chapter 11 to create a montage of digital pictures of their pets, their favorite artwork, or a self-portrait. Or, you can show them how to scan their drawings or take pictures

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of their crafts. If Claire and her friends love dressing up and playacting, encourage them to write a screenplay, take a picture of each part of the story, then assemble the pictures and add a narration.

Spiffing Up Homework

Every kid has homework, but not all of them want to do it. Help them use digital pictures to make their homework more interesting. Most word processing programs let you insert digital pictures in the text and create tables and charts. If Diane has to write a report on Bulgaria or South Dakota, she can find informative pictures—like the state flag and local scenes and activities—to add to her report. Have Kevin use photographs and clip art to create more interesting diagrams and charts for science and math classes—the pictures may also help him understand the material better.

Your kids can also visit the Ask-A-Teacher area (keyword: **Homework Help**) to find teachers, tutors, and other kids to help them with their homework. Or they can get together with other kids who study the same subject and start a Homework Help club. They can make up rules for the club and display their spiffed-up homework on the club message board.

Newsletters

If Cory loves to write, suggest he get together with online and offline pals and start a newsletter. Digital pictures, word processing software, and today's inexpensive printers make it easy for kids to create good-looking publications of their own, like the one shown in figure 8.4. A newsletter can focus on anything under the sun, from what's happening in the neighborhood to information related to a club, hobby, or area of interest. Or he can publish a poetry or art journal showcasing his own or his friends' work.

Your child can print her publication on paper and pass it around, send it to people via e-mail, publish it as a Web page, or all of the above. E-mail, Instant Messages, and forum message boards also give kids a great way to plan the next issue and brainstorm on articles. But remember that publishing a newsletter is a big undertaking. Help Shelby plan and organize it so she can manage and learn from the experience.

Club Materials

Most children love to join clubs. Whether they participate in organized activities or create a club with a group of friends, they enjoy the activities, the sense of belong-

Taylor Street News

>>

Stuff that's happening in the neighborhood

>>

Have you lost your cat?

If you're looking for a cat that looks like the one shown here, my parents and I brought it to the animal shelter so you would be able to find her. You should hurry up and get her because we would like to keep her.

Local Gossip & News

Is that a For Sale sign I see at #305? The Joneses, who have lived there for 15 years, say "No comment."

ing, and the chance to take initiative and use their unique talents. With digital pictures and your computer, your children can create all kinds of materials their clubs can use, including personalized ID cards, secret rule books, and newsletters. Many of the techniques needed for creating these materials have been covered in previous chapters. You can use what you've learned to help your children learn too.

Here are some ideas for club materials:

- **Personalized ID cards.** Your child can instruct the other members to provide small pictures of themselves (school pictures work just fine) on disk. He can use a word processor to create a table. Each table cell can include a picture of a member, along with her name and other information. He can also experiment with special fonts and colors (if you have a color printer). He can print the finished document on cardstock, then use a paper cutter to separate the ID cards.

- **Rule books.** No club is worth joining if it doesn't have a secret rule book. First, have your children confer with other club members about what secret rules they want. Then they can use the AOL text editor to type rules, adding clip art and photographs from the Picture Gallery. If all of the club members are online, your child can also set up the rule book in an e-mail message and send it to everyone.

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- **Club newsletters.** Your child can volunteer to be the editor of the club's newsletter. She can feature a club member of the month or week with a digital picture of the member and his profile. She can write up club news and include digital pictures of events. She can also use clip art to break up the text and make a more entertaining and visually pleasing layout.

- **Personalized yearbooks.** Like you, your children have their favorite chat rooms. They form bonds in those rooms and make lasting friendships. In school, your older children can buy a yearbook as a remembrance of the good times they had. They can create something similar for their clubs, or for their chat room friends. Through the year, your children can collect digital pictures, stories, and information about the other kids in the club or chat room. The yearbook can also include standard yearbook fare, such as Most Likely to Succeed and Featured Moments.

The ideas and suggestions in this chapter will help your children keep busy and stimulate their minds. These projects are also a great way for you and your children to spend quality time together.

9
USING DIGITAL PICTURES AT WORK

We associate pictures with fun or special occasions. But digital pictures can also help you be more productive and promote your business. You already use pictures at work every day without even thinking about it. Take a look at the stationery you print your correspondence on and the business cards you hand out. They probably have a logo or other graphic elements. Your sales brochures and company literature may include photographs or clip art.

Perhaps you would like to use more images in your materials, but haven't yet because you think doing so is too costly, or requires too much time or technical skill. Fortunately, today's technology makes it easy and inexpensive to create and distribute attractive materials including digital pictures. You have America Online, inexpensive hardware and software, and your newly acquired digital pictures expertise at your disposal. Whether your business earns you six figures or you run a shoe-string startup out of your house, digital pictures can help you get the word out, impress clients and customers, get things done faster, and improve your existing materials.

This chapter introduces you to a variety of ways to use digital pictures—online and off—to benefit your business:

- **Be your own designer and printer.** An inexpensive color printer and a good word processing or desktop publishing program can help you quickly design your own materials and print them out when you need them. Even if you already work with a graphic designer, good software and a color printer give you the flexibility to customize and update files at a moment's notice. You can find them in the Digital Imaging Shop of the AOL Store (keyword: **Digital Shop**).

- **Track clients, inventory, and business records.** Digital pictures provide memory cues that can help you stay organized and remember all those details. Many commonly used database, personal management, and other office productivity software programs let you import digital pictures.

This chapter will clue you in on all the ways you can use digital pictures at work. Use them on business cards, stationery, sales brochures, catalogs, and other materials. Use them to impress clients and maintain contact with them online. Use them to track your customers, inventory, and business records.

Create Your Own Business Materials

Printing takes up a sizable chunk of everyone's business budget. Wouldn't it be great to find a way to reduce costs? With digital pictures, clip art, and a color

printer, you can save money, gain flexibility, and have a little fun creating your own business materials. This is much easier than you may think.

Judith and Bob run a small, specialty gift shop. For years they made a comfortable living from business generated by their Yellow Pages and local newspaper ads. Then they started visiting the AOL WorkPlace channel (keyword: **Workplace**), as shown in figure 9.1.

They found forums, e-mail lists, and other resources for information and support in running their small business. In addition to making some wonderful friends and contacts on these forums and lists, they learned about scanners and color printers, and how other entrepreneurs use them. Now Judith and Bob design and print invitations to the store's holiday party, flyers for upcoming sales, greeting cards for special customers, and other special pieces. Sure, they still send big jobs to the printer. But before the advent of inexpensive color printers, Judith and Bob never could have afforded to print the kind of gorgeous, full-color brochures that bring in slews of new customers.

FIGURE 9.1
WorkPlace
Main Screen

No matter what kind of business you run, there are times when tailoring a proposal or brochure for a particular client is very useful. Or what about the time you moved to a new location and had to change all your business cards and letterhead, though you still had hundreds left from the last print run? With digital pictures and the equipment discussed in chapter 10, you can design attractive pieces on the fly. If you're just starting out and aren't yet ready to spend money having a printer make up 1,000 business cards, you can also print out professional-looking cards as you need them.

Business Cards

A business card may be small, yet this simple piece of paper says more about your company and goes farther in promoting your business than almost any other tool you use. When you send a letter to a client, you sometimes slip one of your business cards inside. Every meeting you attend seems to begin or end with participants passing out business cards. Business cards with color and graphics get the most attention. But until now most of us could afford only the plain old black-and-white ones. Now you can hand out exciting-looking, colorful business cards with digital pictures—even if you don't have a color printer.

First, visit an office supply store and purchase pre-made packages of business cards. Pre-made business cards come in sheets of thick paper stock still thin enough to run through your printer. The paper is perforated so you can separate the cards from one another after you finish printing them. Each sheet of paper yields ten business cards. They come in all different colors. Some even come with colorful designs already printed on them.

After purchasing your business cards, you can create a set of cards with your word processor or desktop publishing program. Digital pictures can go a long way when personalizing your card. You can use either clip art or a simple photograph. If you use a photograph, use an image that looks good even when reduced in size.

Many programs come with templates for generating business cards. Or you can create your own template using the following specifications:

- **Margins.** Set the top, bottom, right, and left margins to .5 inches.

- **Columns.** Create two columns with a column width of .25 inches each.

- **Height and width.** Each card on the sheet of paper is 2 inches high and 3.5 inches wide. Leave a little space between each card.

Experiment with fonts and pictures until you design a business card you like. Then copy and paste it to create your sheet of business cards. Each column should have five cards for a total of ten. Some word processing programs make it easy for you to set up business cards. They let you create, size, and position frames that enclose text and images. You can then copy, paste, and position each frame. With other programs, you may have to experiment until your cards are positioned correctly for printing.

Letterhead

John is an accountant working from his home office. Although he considers himself more of a number cruncher than an artistic type, he still likes his stationery, business cards, and other materials to stand out from the crowd. With some clip art and a
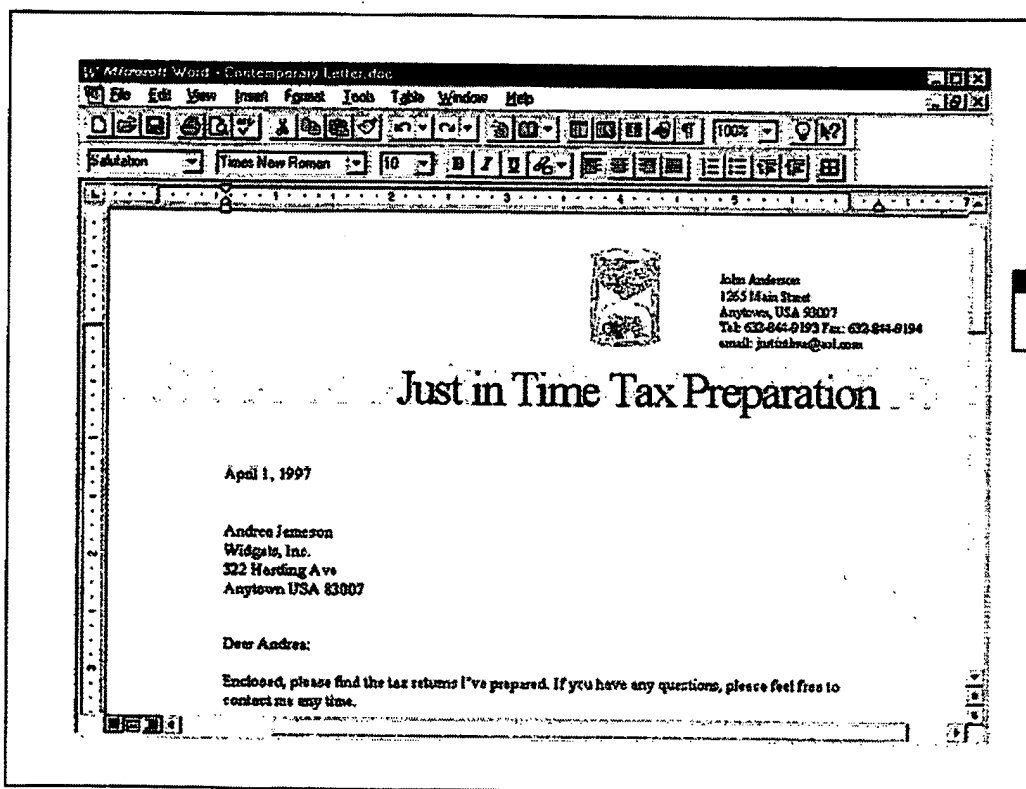
FIGURE 9.2

Stationery with clip art

template, John created his own stationery, as shown in figure 9.2. He then bought some good paper stock and matching envelopes for his correspondence, and gets lots of comments on how nice his stationery looks. When his wife gave him a digital camera for his birthday, John was surprised by how much he enjoyed working with digital pictures. Now he designs his own holiday cards, tax-time reminder notices, and other mailings.

Making your own stationery is even easier than making your own business cards. Buy paper you like in a variety of colors and stocks. Many stores even sell sets of pre-made business cards, stationery, and envelopes so all your materials will match. Then use a template in your desktop publishing or word processing program and insert your images and information (see figure 9.3). Or you can create the letterhead from scratch.

Brochures, Reports, and Proposals

Once you get the hang of working with text and images, you can start using digital pictures in other areas of your business. Mark, a sales manager, often brings work home with him. One night, after tucking his kids into bed, he had only a couple of hours in which to crank out a sales report for the next day's meeting and still have time for a decent night's sleep. Mark's department had done particularly well over

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FIGURE 9.3
Business Form
Template

the past fiscal quarter and he wanted upper-level managers to notice.

First, he wrote the report. Then he scanned in photographs of the booth he and his department set up at a recent trade show, the sales person of the month, and other recent events. He also used clip art to jazz up the graphs and charts. By the end of the evening, Mark had a stack of impressive-looking color printouts in time to get plenty of sleep for the next day's meeting.

Presentation Transparencies

Karen was making a Tuesday presentation to one of the biggest manufacturers in her territory. She knew pictures would convince their board of directors that her company's products are the best for their business. She scanned pictures of other companies using her products, illustrating the different ways they can be used. Then she used the digital pictures and her computer to put together a dynamite presentation. Once each page of her presentation was perfect, she printed copies on her company's color printer. Then she used those copies and her company's color copier to make transparencies.

All weekend Karen practiced her presentation until she had it down perfectly for the Tuesday meeting. Her confidence came through in her presentation. She impressed the board and got their business.

Jim is a contract speaker. He works for a national company that books him for conferences and seminars all over the country. He is considered an expert in his field and his seminars are always booked to capacity. Jim knows if he spent the whole eight hours of each presentation just speaking, he would

COMPRESSING FILES FOR QUICK AND EASY TRANSFER AND STORAGE

Certain digital formats compress photo images well. However, no matter what digital format you use, digital picture files are larger than other types of files because of the amount of information they contain.

When you try to send these files via e-mail or Instant Messages, the transfer can take several minutes. Compressing your digital picture files before you send them will save you and the recipient time. That's why AOL 4.0 has been designed to compress multiple file attachments automatically.

If you want to transfer or store digital pictures online, you need to compress them into smaller files. Several programs compress, or zip, files for you. One such program, mentioned in an earlier chapter, is called WinZip. It is a shareware program; that means you pay a small fee to obtain a registered copy of the program. You can find it at the Software Center (keyword: Software).

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lose his audience. So he scans relevant photographs into his computer, prints them on his color printer, and converts them into transparencies at a print shop for less than $5 each. He uses the slide show to boost his presentation.

With the proper equipment and tools, a little imagination, and initiative, you can create killer transparencies using digital pictures. Look for tools like a color printer, a color copier, a scanner, and a digital camera at the AOL Store (keyword: **AOL Store**).

Promoting Your Business Online

Insiders know AOL and the Web offer a wealth of business opportunities. Beverly runs a business developing custom applications and help systems for small businesses. Five years ago she signed up with AOL, and since then her business has doubled. Although some chat groups and forums discourage advertising, on others it is perfectly acceptable. Beverly finds that when she mentions what she does, people sometimes send e-mail messages asking about her services and rates. When she writes back, she includes an electronic business card so people will remember her. And of course, her Web page, with links to clients she has worked for, helps generate business for her too.

You too can use AOL as an easy way to distribute digital pictures and other types of files. If you run a restaurant and people you meet online ask about it, you can e-mail them pictures of your location and cuisine. Who knows? They may actually travel to your area sometime. Or, if you're a professional photographer, you can upload pictures of your work to designated forums or display them on your Web page.

E-mail

We take e-mail so much for granted, many of us don't even think of it as a business tool. E-mail gives you an easy way to send digital pictures and other types of files back and forth. Suppose you are a freelance writer who has discovered a wonderful, sleepy beach town on the California coast. If you are inspired, you could go online to find the Web sites of a few magazines likely to print an article about it. Look for the editors' e-mail addresses and send query letters. Later, you can send the article and a couple of pictures as e-mail attachments.
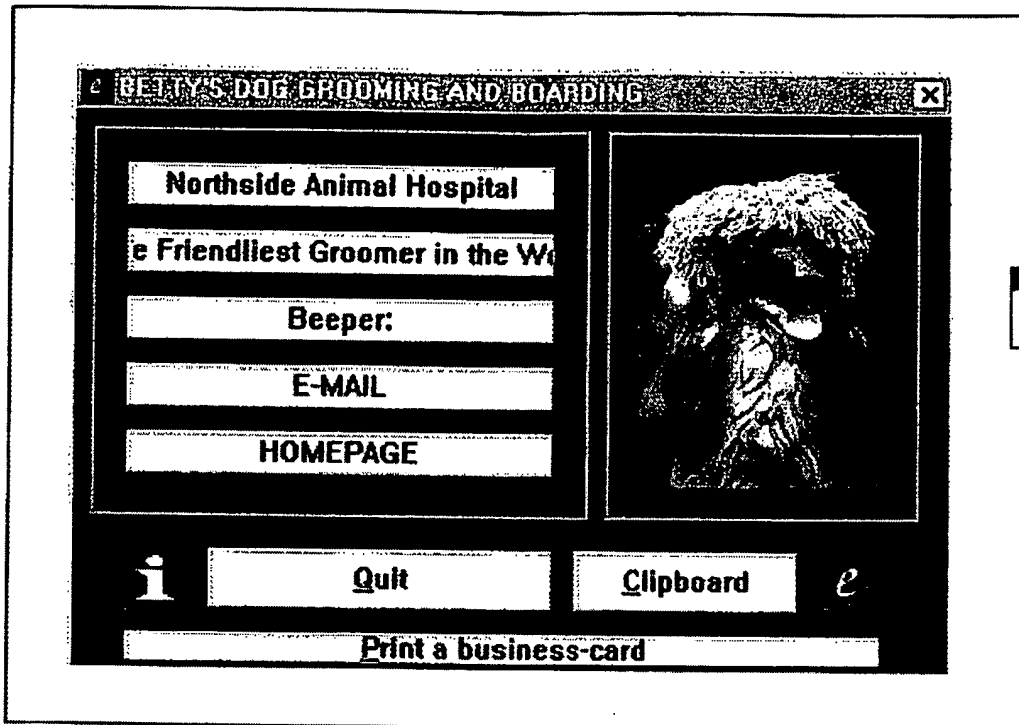
BETTY'S DOG GROOMING AND BOARDING

Northside Animal Hospital

e Friendliest Groomer in the W(

Beeper:

E-MAIL

HOMEPAGE

i   **Quit**   **Clipboard**   e

Print a business-card

FIGURE 9.4

Electronic
business card

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Electronic Business Cards

Sam runs a small mail order catalog business. He learned how to create an electronic business card and attaches it to his e-mail correspondence and forum postings. Betty is a dog groomer who also arranges for care and boarding of people's pets. She loves giving fellow members of the AOL community tips on grooming and caring for pets and regularly exchanges electronic business cards with the people she meets online (see figure 9.4). Electronic business cards make it easy to provide people with contact information and make an impression in your online communications.

Electronic business card programs like Visual Business Cards and Electronic Card Maker let other people view your business card—even if they don't have the program you used to create it. Some of these applications are shareware, so you can try them before you buy them.
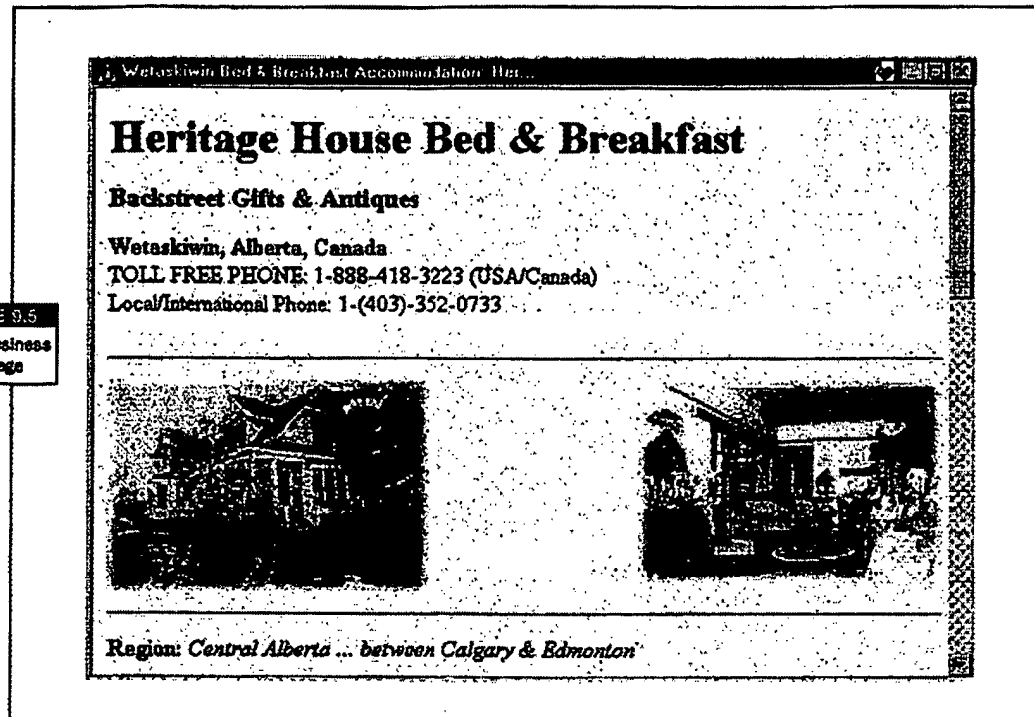
Heritage House Bed & Breakfast

Backstreet Gifts & Antiques

Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada
TOLL FREE PHONE: 1-888-418-3223 (USA/Canada)
Local/International Phone: 1-(403)-352-0733

Region: *Central Alberta ... between Calgary & Edmonton*

Electronic business card applications generally display a form where you enter your name, company name, contact information, and a picture. Sometimes you can even include a sound file. Once you finish creating the business card, save it as a file or copy it to your computer's clipboard so you can paste it into other files. When you attach it to messages, your recipients can open the file and view it. Some programs display all the information, while others require the user to click on buttons to display the information associated with the button. Electronic business cards only work online. They do not print correctly as typical business cards.

Web Pages

Let's say you're the brand-new proprietor of a quaint bed-and-breakfast. How can you attract more guests? Try creating a Web page like the one shown in figure 9.5. Each lovely, cozy room is displayed to entice customers to book reservations. You can use banner ads to advertise your inn and Web site on other sites. Or contact people in related businesses—such as vacation and travel—to list links on each other's pages. Naturally, you can register your Web site with all of the search engines, starting with AOL NetFind, which you can select from the menu that appears when you click on the Internet button on the AOL toolbar. Each search engine has an area

YOU'VE GOT PICTURES! AOL'S GUIDE TO DIGITAL IMAGING

where you can register your Web site, and provides detailed instructions to make the process easy.

Tracking Clients and Inventory

You can also use digital pictures to help track clients and inventory. For example, Terry and Jeanne own a small but successful nursery and landscaping business. Like most of us, they need to stay competitive, but they don't have a large operating or advertising budget. Digital pictures help them make the most of their limited resources. Terry is a photography buff and he takes digital pictures the minute flowers bloom or new plants arrive. Like him, you can take digital pictures of your inventory and upload them for your customers to see.

Microsoft Access and several other popular database programs let you import pictures into your files, where you can use them to locate products for particular customers.

Once you've imported the pictures into your database, you can easily find the pictures and related information for your company's online catalog. Terry and Jeanne's Web site has become so popular among gardening enthusiasts that they can barely keep up with their online orders.

Keeping track of everything happening in your business is essential for success. Besides, the IRS requires that you keep accurate records of all financial transactions. To file an accurate tax return, you must know your inventory, your sales, and your receipts.

Or let's say you need to keep track of a *lot* of inventory and plan to publish a catalog. Kathy and Steve run a mail-order catalog for specialty pet products. They publish their catalog four times a year. Finding the right pictures for the listings was a hassle until Kathy began using a scanner and digital camera. By adding her own pictures to the company's inventory database, she made gathering and organizing material for the catalog a whole lot easier.

Digital pictures can even help you keep on top of smaller operations. For example, when Mary Ann signs on a new client for her personal shopping business, the client gives her pictures of everyone on his gift list. Mary Ann then converts the pictures to digital format, if needed, and adds them to a customer tracking program. Her personal scheduling program reminds her to shop for a client. Then she finds the client

USING DIGITAL PICTURES AT WORK

in her database, where she reviews the client's needs, past gifts given (also shown as digital pictures), and the date the gift must be delivered. With all the information Mary Ann has in her client database, she is an informed shopper who can purchase the perfect gift for her client. She looks good and the client looks even better to his special someone. Birthdays and anniversaries are never forgotten and Mary Ann never makes the mistake of buying the wrong present for the wrong person or sending a duplicate present.

Is your head starting to be filled with creative ideas for digital pictures? If so, you will probably want to consider setting up a digital lab. We'll show you how in the next chapter.