



Monthly Checkup

NOTE: This is an abbreviated example of the types of timesaving and money-stretching resources you will find in the *Exhibit Doctor's "Monthly Checkup."* Each complete *"Checkup"* contains over two dozen different resources each and every month that you'll be able to put to good use right away.

And remember --- a yearly Exhibit Doctor subscription costs ***less*** than what you would normally pay for just one day of exhibit consulting fees!

Go to www.ExhibitDoctor.net to find out more.

This month's *"Checkup"* focuses on some great digital and on-line tools (both hardware and software) that can really make your exhibition development and production processes become much more efficient.

Let's start with an organizational tool called:

Evernote: <http://evernote.com/>

Have you ever been working on an exhibit project and wished you could readily keep track of all your relevant websites, notes, or digital camera images, and then be able to access these inspirations easily from your computer, the Web, or your other digital devices?

If so, then check out Evernote.

The folks at Evernote bill their product as your "external brain." They offer free versions of their software that work with Windows or Mac computers, in addition to web browsers and cell phones. Best of all, Evernote can effortlessly sync information between all of these devices. Evernote even interfaces with popular programs like Skitch and Jott.

I've just started using Evernote to keep track of all my various projects' paraphernalia, and I think I may have finally found a better solution than unmanageable web-browser bookmark files or overstuffed folders filled with scraps of paper, printouts, and torn-out magazine pages!

One feature that I really like is Evernote's ability to search for words that are part of images that were not originally entered as text --- a label from an exhibit, or a bottle of wine at a restaurant that you want to remember --- just snap a picture to put it into an Evernote folder.

Digital Picture Frames: <http://www.digiframes.com/>

Sometimes you need to incorporate a video element into an exhibition on the cheap. Digital picture frames are a great way to go, and the digiframes website offers a wide range of frames to choose from and great customer service as well. Super resolution and built-in memory and programming options are now standard on most digital picture frame models.

Arduino: <http://www.arduino.cc/>

Arduino is an open-source electronics prototyping platform based on flexible, easy-to-use hardware and software. It's intended for artists, designers, hobbyists, and anyone interested in creating interactive objects or environments.

Arduino can sense the environment by receiving input from a variety of sensors and can affect its surroundings by controlling lights, motors, and other actuators. The microcontroller on the board is programmed using the Arduino programming language (based on Wiring) and the Arduino development environment (based on Processing). Arduino projects can be stand-alone or they can communicate with software on running on a computer (e.g. Flash, Processing, MaxMSP).

The boards can be built by hand or purchased preassembled; the software can be downloaded for free. The hardware reference designs (CAD files) are available under an open-source license, so you are free to adapt them to your needs.

FindSounds: <http://www.findsounds.com/>

Given the fact that museums are continuing to develop more and more multimedia exhibits and web-based adjunct experiences, finding digital versions of particular sounds to create these resources is often an issue.

So where do you go if you need, say, the sound of an umbrella opening, or an elephant's roar?

One great resource for your sonic searches is the FindSounds website. It's sort of like Google for people in search of particular digital sound files. Simply enter a search term, like "umbrella" and FindSounds does the rest. You can additionally set parameters for particular file types, file size and sample rate as well.

FindSounds has found its niche, and fills it well. Give it a whirl (and a listen!)

ScreenKeys: <http://www.screenkeys.com/>

Well, if a technology has shown up in Popular Science magazine, as well as the Science Museum of Minnesota's "Beyond the Button" blog (<http://www.smm.org/blogs/>) it must be good!

Ironically, given the title of SMM's blog, the technology called ScreenKeys is a type of push button that embeds a programmable LCD screen into the surface of the button.

While it sounds like a wacky idea, the ScreenKeys website offers some interesting ideas for using the technology, including control platforms for a multi-camera TV station, or a multi-station conveyor belt control panel. (Check out the interactive demo on the website!)



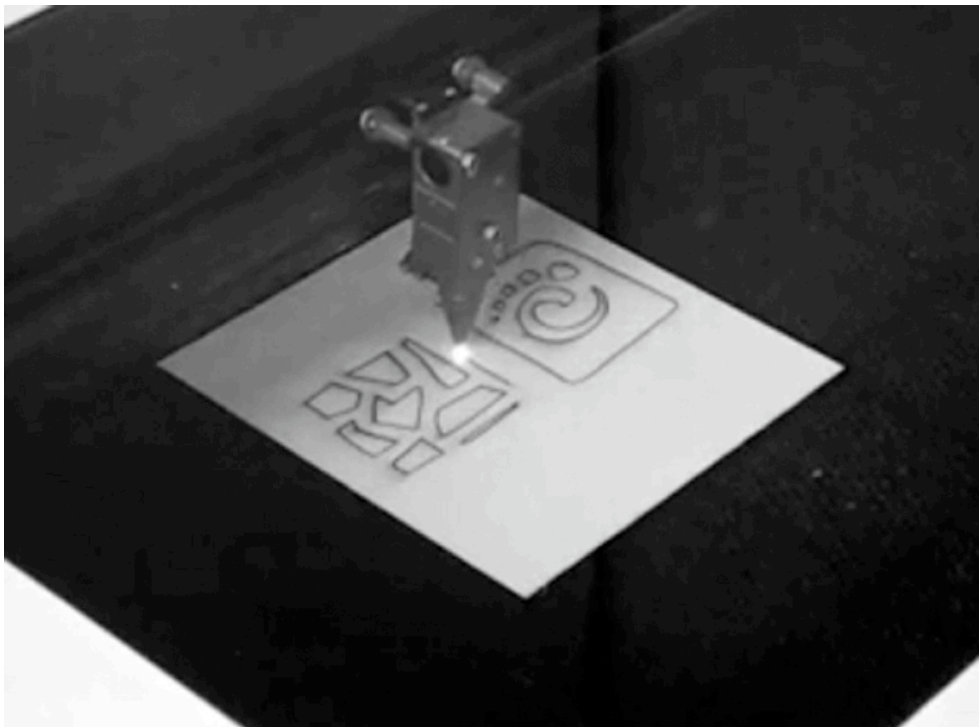
Desktop Design Tools

Computer-controlled devices using lasers, water-jets, and cutting tools allow us to create intricate exhibit pieces out of exotic substrates (or exact multiples of those pieces) never before possible. These technologies are now at the stage that computer desktop printers were 10 years ago --- a little clunky and slightly too expensive, but the promise of converting a computer file into an actual physical object is amazing!

The **FabLab** program website at MIT (<http://fab.cba.mit.edu/about/faq/>) can help you chart the current and future worlds of personal fabrication machines.

Ponoko and Photomake: <http://www.ponoko.com/>

Even though desktop or small workshop versions of computer-controlled fabrication tools are becoming more affordable and commonplace, many of us can't currently utilize, or afford to utilize, these technologies. Enter Ponoko, a website that allows you to upload your design, choose a substrate, and order the units you want their tools to create. Now Ponoko's Photomake service has even eliminated the need for high-end computer software. With Photomake, just hand-draw your design, send Ponoko a digital photo or scan, and they'll ship you back your finished product!



Lastly, attach your storage container(s) to the wooden base holding the dowels.

If you don't want to construct your own bead holder, multi-compartment wooden storage containers (like the one pictured below) are often available at stores with home furnishing sections such as IKEA or Target. Your storage container should have a different compartment for each color of bead that you use.