

PRODUCT reviews

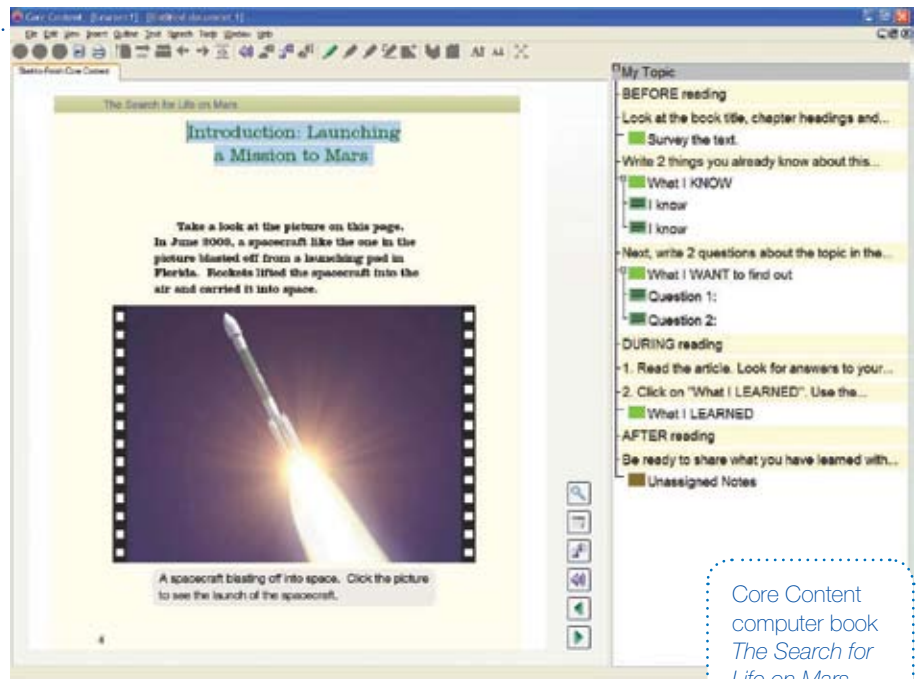
- Start-to-Finish Core Content
- Samsung CLP-650N Color Laser Printer
- Ulead VideoStudio 10 Plus

Start-to-Finish Core Content

By Terence W. Cavanaugh

Start-to-Finish books are an excellent example of how text can be adapted to better serve students who may be reluctant or remedial readers, those who may have a print disability, and students who may be English language learners (ELL). The Start-to-Finish Core series has added another facet by providing high interest books in science and history. The Core Content books are written to two reading ranges: Gold Core Content for grade 2–3 readability and Blue Core Content for grade 4–5 readability. Although the structure of the text is designed for those readability levels, the content itself could be appropriate for science and history courses through high school, depending on the ability or needs of the learner.

The system has three different facets that can be used independently or together. There is a paperback book, CD audio book, and a computer book version of the text, with a single book title set available at \$79. The text itself is written to be grade-level appropriate in structure with appropriate visual styles, including color images and color-coded text to provide clues about the words. The texts are designed to provide reading supports to assist in comprehension, including supported reading guides, pre-reading questions, and summaries. The computer book version adds an additional level of interaction with its outlining, note taking, and concept mapping abilities.

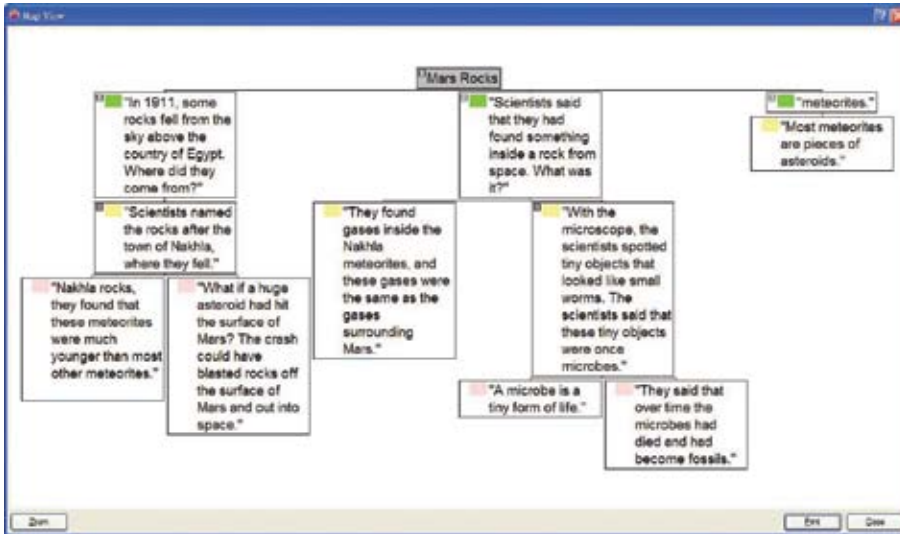


Core Content computer book
The Search for Life on Mars
displaying the book text and a KWL-supported reading guide as an outline.

The audio book provides each chapter as a separate track, which is read by a professional reader reciting the complete text. The audio book version can be used by itself or as a tool for listening as the student reads along, supporting multi-channel input for learning. It would be nice if in the future Don Johnston would also include MP3 versions of the chapters for use with the MP3 players that are starting to be used in classrooms.

The computer book version requires that the Core Content program be installed, but when the program runs, each book is run from its CD. The Core Content program will save student-created works and can be used by a teacher to track what a student has done. Teachers can also use the Teacher Central portion of the program to preset some options for the individual readers in a class. When running the

book on the computer, the program allows users to adjust the display size (75–150%), and provides synchronized sentence-by-sentence highlighting of text with audio narration, which is available both as computerized text-to-speech and professional human narration. In addition to the two forms of audio narration, the computer book provides a number of videos that can be accessed by clicking on book images that have sprocket edges. Perhaps the most impressive features of the computer book are its interactive features. The computer book interface allows readers to use multicolored highlighters within the text for activities similar to power highlighting. These highlights are also used with the sidebar for note taking and outlining. The system also



Concept map made from using the power highlighting and mapping tools of a chapter from a Core Content computer book.

provides three different versions of preset KWL-supported reading guides that can be used with the outlining tool. Also impressive is the ability of the program to take the outline and display it as a manipulatable concept map.

The supports and options provided by the different versions of each book, including audio book and computer versions in the Core Content series, allow students to read materials that are at their instructional level, at the same time keeping them from be-

coming frustrated due to a reading problem or print disability. These supports make the Start-to-Finish Core Content books for science and history an excellent resource for any teacher involved with those subjects.

Start-to-Finish Core Content

Don Johnston
1.800.999.4660
<http://www.donjohnston.com>

Price: \$79 for an individual set of a paperback, CD, and computer book. Individual paperback (\$8.48–\$12.45) and audio books (\$14.49–\$18.95).

Requirements: Computer Book: Mac (OS 10.2 or higher); Win (2000 or XP).



Dr. Terence W. Cavanaugh is an instructor of instructional technology in the College of Education and Human Services at the University of North Florida. His areas of interest include instructional technology, electronic books, assistive technology, ESOL education, and teacher education. He has been an educator for 25 years at the college and secondary levels.

Samsung CLP-650N

By J.V. Bolkan

Color printing really isn't an option any longer—it's mandatory. Samsung's CLP-650N is a network-ready color laser printer that hits both performance and pricing sweet spots.

Priced at less than \$800, the CLP-650N is affordable enough for a larger classroom. Capable of printing an impressive 20 pages per minute in color mode, it can serve as the main printer for a cluster of classrooms or a busy administration office.

Inkjet printers can produce output of comparable quality and initially cost considerably less. However, the CLP-650N is faster than virtually any

inkjet printer and, more important, it will pay for itself in reduced print costs, perhaps in the same budget cycle it is purchased in.

Furthermore, the CLP-650N has built-in Ethernet, enabling it to simply plug into an existing network without tying up a computer.

The CLP-650N is a hefty device. At just more than 64 lbs., and close to 2' cubed, this isn't a printer you'll want to just set down on a regular desk. You'll need a sturdy desk and at least another foot of open space on the side for the fold-out extra paper tray.

Print quality at the highest settings is very good. Resolution is 2400 x 600 dpi. Lasers produce great looking output even on inexpensive paper, unlike inkjet devices. I did try and get the CLP-650N to misfeed, but extremely

heavy card stock posed no problem, even in the internal paper tray. I did discover a sensitivity to coated photo paper designed for an inkjet. The toner didn't completely fuse to the paper and the next sheet jammed. Clearing the jam took only a few seconds. I ran the same print job on the same paper type through two other color lasers without incident. I couldn't get the toner to crack or flake from a variety of non-coated papers, so I don't think it's a problem. I did get good results from a matte finish coated paper, but I'd suggest only using laser-rated fancy stocks.

Paper handling capabilities are much more robust than most standard printers, but only adequate for a network printer. The main paper tray, which slides out of the front of the



The Samsung CLP-650N features a 600 MHz MIPS processor, both PostScript and PCL emulations, and a rapid 16 second first page output.

printer, holds a generous 250 sheets. The fold-out paper tray can handle as many as 100 sheets. A 500-sheet optional cassette tray is available and

should probably be considered a must purchase if the printer is going to be shared across classrooms.

Setup and basic maintenance are a snap. The four individual color toner cartridges are the easiest and most foolproof I've ever dealt with. Cartridges are estimated to produce 4,000 pages. The image belt is rated for 35,000 pages. The monthly duty cycle is a healthy 45,000 pages. The software installation under Windows XP couldn't have been more simple, and setting up the networking was barely

more challenging than plugging in an Ethernet cable.

The CLP-650N is compatible with Windows 98SE and newer, various Linux versions, and MAC OS 8.6 and newer. It can be connected through Ethernet 10/100, USB 2.0, or parallel print cable (IEEE1284).

Samsung CLP-650N
<http://www.samsung.com>
 1.800.726.7864

Price: \$799

Ulead VideoStudio 10 Plus

By J.V. Bolkan

Ulead's VideoStudio 10 Plus offers enough power to produce almost any classroom video project you or your students are likely to imagine. It is also simple enough to use that your students will be able bring their imagined projects into being with a minimum of frustration. It remains an outstanding value at \$99.

VideoStudio 10 retains its predecessors ease of use and look and feel. As you'd expect from a successful software in its 10th full version, the base functionality is stable and polished. Changes are evolutionary, but that isn't to say they aren't extremely worthwhile.

Many of the improvements in this version come in the addition of High Definition (HD) capabilities. The program now supports HD capture, editing, HD DVD burning and playback.

Many of the other new features also can drastically improve the quality of the videos you produce. The editing module now includes Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound mixing, multiple

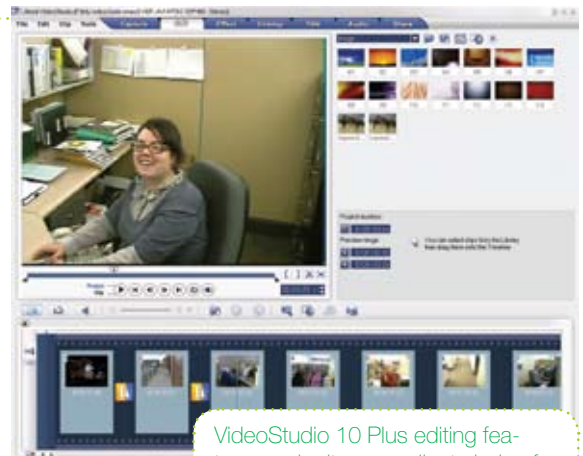
overlay tracks for creating complex and impressive effects such as picture-in-picture and montages, and audio waveform display for more effective music and soundtrack editing.

Some of the other new features actually make it easier to decrease the quality of your video output—by scaling down the video for mobile devices such as iPods and PSPs.

Effort has also gone into time-saving features. A feature called Ad-Zapper can automatically remove commercials from TV programs. You can also automatically transfer an entire DV tape from your camcorder directly to DVD.

The program is full of such subtle, yet important new gems. Most of these new features are in the Plus version, but not the standard.

In addition to the great depth in the main modules, Ulead adds its Cool 3D animation and title creation application and WinDVD player.



VideoStudio 10 Plus editing features make it an excellent choice for beginners and power users alike.

VideoStudio has always been excellent for newcomers to video editing. With its new sophisticated touches, it's more video creation power than all but professionals will ever need.

Ulead VideoStudio 10 Plus
 interVideo Ulead
<http://www.ulead.com>
 Windows only



J.V. Bolkan is associate publisher/senior editor for L&L. He has been reviewing and writing about multimedia and technology for more than 20 years.