# New Computer Technologies to Be Rolled Out

**Way back in the 1990s**, I had a fold-out keyboard that I plugged into my Palm Pilot handheld organizer when I wanted to take notes at a meeting. I could touch-type on it while maintaining eye contact with the people I was speaking with. These sorts of devices still exist, but never really caught on despite the "ooohs" and "aaaahs" I received every time I whipped mine out. Now there is something better waiting in the wings. The development of flexible, organic light-emitting diode (OLED) display technology is about to revolutionize the world of portable computing.

Part of what undermined the success of the fold-out keyboards may have been the move to infrared, and then Bluetooth, connections. Although those connections theoretically made the keyboards compatible with more handheld devices, the connections were never as reliable as that on my original Palm Pilot, which used a fitted, device-specific, plug connector. Software compatibility also continues to be a challenge, and a third issue has been durability.

Nevertheless, the need for such a device has not disappeared. Although cell phones, BlackBerry devices, and iPhones all provide access to keyboards, none of them is suitable for fast touch typing. Even super-fast teenage texters cannot generally type while looking up and concentrating on what is transpiring around them.

The netbook, or mini laptop, is popular due in large measure to its ability to meet this need for a combination of ultra-portability and typing effectiveness; they come, however, with other problems. They are not small enough to fit in a pocket and carry effortlessly, and the screens are not large enough to work with comfortably, especially on non-text documents. There are also complaints from people with large fingers that the keyboards are not really sufficient for touch typing.

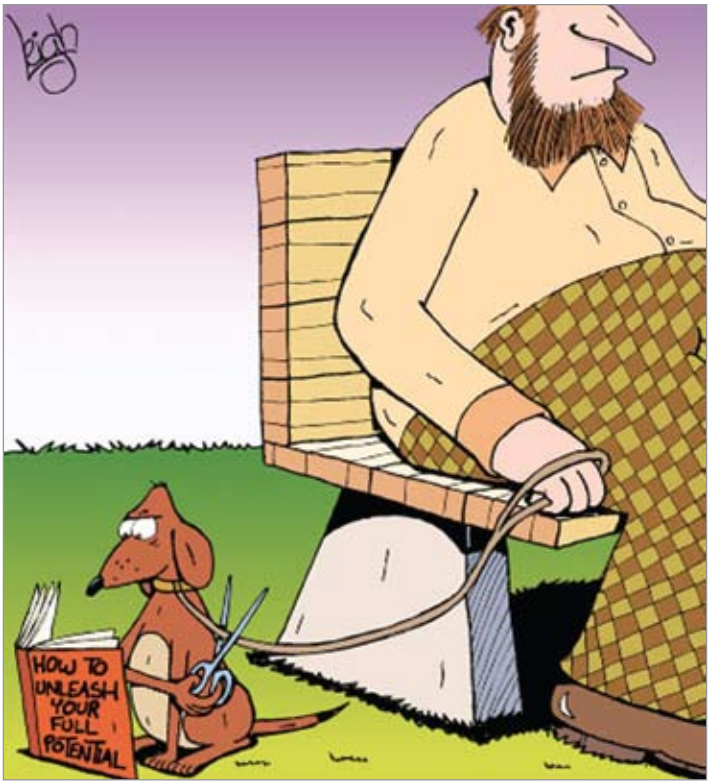
Enter young Munich-based designer Evgeny Orkin. Recognizing that OLED technology can be used for screens that are ultra-thin, lightweight, bendable, and durable, he has developed a concept for what he calls the "Rolltop Computer." About the size of a water bottle, you can sling it over your shoulder to easily carry it wherever you go. Unroll the tube and you've got a laptop computer with a thirteen inch display and full keyboard. Or, if you prefer, a flat seventeen inch display can be used with a stylus. The tube around which the display is rolled contains the speaker, power cords, and USB ports.

Evgeny designed the Rolltop as part of a diploma thesis and is hoping to sign with a manufacturer soon. A video demo of the concept can be seen at http://www.orkin-design.de/design/rolltop/movie/FXVideo_Example.html.

Whether his design will prove feasible to manufacture in the near future remains to be seen. In the meantime, OLED technology will doubtless be used to make mobile phones lighter and more durable. No more shattered screens from dropping your phone on the floor; no more worries if it gets wet.UX

*—Tema Frank*

## Rubes™ By Leigh Rubin

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