



Capital Apple, Mac  
Performa User  
Group



Gardiner, Maine

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# Best Buy Coming to Augusta; Circuit City Woes

by Jeffrey Frankel, newsletter editor

I recently read with interest in the *Kennebec Journal* that Best Buy has signed on as a tenant in Augusta Crossing, the new mall under construction just off Western Avenue in Augusta.

Best Buy is the nation's largest consumer electronics chain and competes directly against Circuit City, which has operated locally at the Marketplace at Augusta for fifteen months or thereabouts.

Circuit City, a much smaller chain, has been on the skids nationally. In February it announced the closing of 70 stores (62 of them in Canada) due to low profit margins on flat-panel TVs during the 2006 holiday season. Last month brought the peculiar news that CC was firing 3500 employees nationally in order to replace them with lower-paid employees.

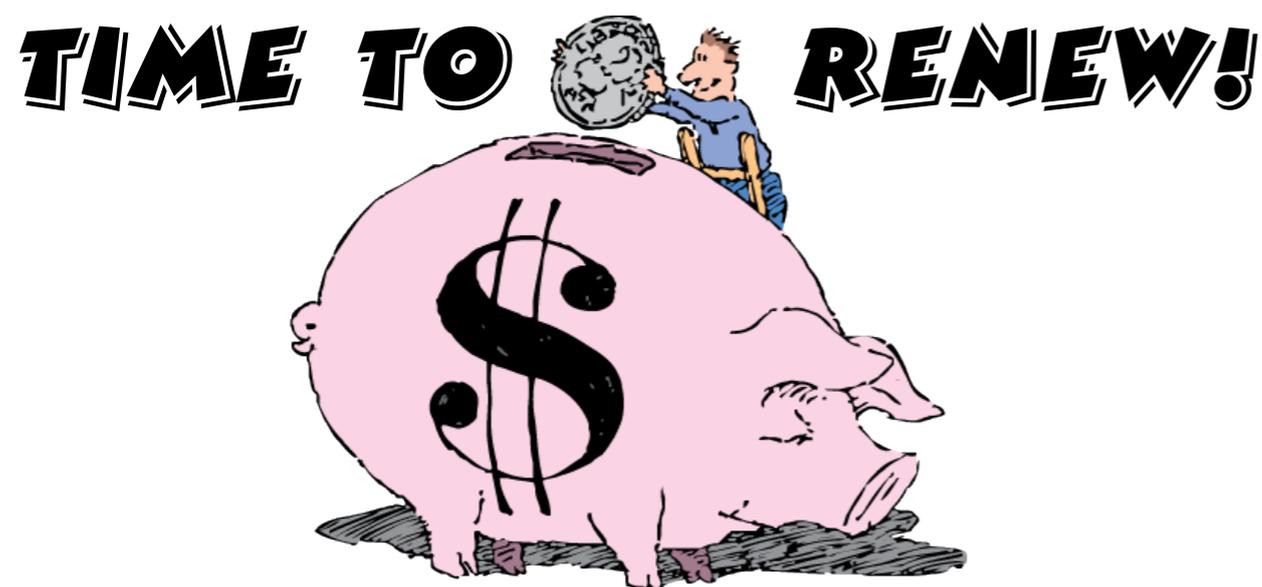
In this latter respect, CC actually managed to out-Wal-Mart Wal-Mart. Last year, Wallyworld caught a raft of sh\*\* when a management memo proposing that very measure was leaked to the press. Wal-Mart backpedaled under public pressure. But Circuit City has boldly strode where no sane retailer has strode before.

The Associated Press report on this move noted the risks involved:

Morale could sink and customers could avoid the stores. Also, knowledgeable customer service is one of the few ways Circuit City can tackle competitors that include Wal-Mart Stores, Inc...

Circuit City's cuts come at a time when other retailers are trying to put more knowledgeable workers on store floors. Home Depot Inc., whose new chief executive is struggling to re-ignite sales growth at its stores, said it has raised pay to attract skilled tradespeople, such as carpenters and electricians.

This writer finds Circuit City's move to everyday low wages offensive. *Skilled* labor has long been a respected bulk commodity. A contractor who needs x machinists and x pipefitters from the union hall for a given job can get them. But dumping employees wholesale in the manner of finding a lower-cost sup-



It's spring, and a not-so-young newsletter editor's fancy turns to thoughts of...membership renewal. All CAMP memberships expire annually on April 30, which means that the day of reckoning is close at hand.

Membership dues remain unchanged at \$20 per year. Please make your annual dues payment to membership director Mike Knight at the April meeting or mail a check to Mike at 483 Marston Road, Gardiner, ME 04345.

Ten per cent discounts are once again being offered to CAMP members by:

- Re-Books, 25 East Concourse, Waterville, 877-2484, so long as owner and CAMP member Rob Sezak is in the store
- Second Stories used books, CAMP member Steve Katz, stk@gwi.net.

ply of thumb drives is malicious, even under the disposable employee mentality that is so common today.

In the case of Circuit City, this move is particularly boneheaded. CC sells itself as a *knowledge* store. Its weekly circular is filled with come-ons for its "Firedog" service, under which store employees install that new software on your laptop, or come to your house to install the new home theater system you've just purchased. So Circuit City is now telling its customers to count on inexperienced employees to get the job done right? *R-i-g-h-t*.

This may not affect us locally; the *Kennebec Journal* reported that only one person was let go at the Augusta store as part of this campaign.

But there's certainly plenty of room for improvement down at the Marketplace. Last December, I was part of a group of maybe fifteen or twenty people waiting for Circuit City to open its doors on a chilly Saturday morning. We were all holiday shoppers in a festive mood and joked with each other about the cold. The golden moment finally arrived, and an employee opened a gate to let us in. This soul-less drone didn't greet us or acknowledge us in any fashion. I show more enthusiasm when I let in my cat.

For many months I had had my eye on a certain model of digital SLR camera. When Circuit City put the camera on sale, I decided to make my purchase there, in part to support my quasi-local economy. So on a Friday night in early February, I journeyed to the Augusta store intending to come home with a camera. Alas, it was not to be. The digital SLRs are kept in a locked cabinet, which means that you must have a sales clerk open the case for you. There were three clerks on duty in that part of the store that evening, all of whom were helping other customers and installing software on new purchases. After trying in vain to attract some one's attention for 25 minutes, I gave up and went home empty-handed. I bought the camera on line from B&H Photo instead.

As matters currently stand, I have about as much loyalty for Circuit City as Circuit City has for its employees.

Thankfully, my experiences at Staples, Sears and Radio Shack have been far more positive. And in a year or so we'll see what new ingredient Best Buy adds to the stew.

But what does the Augusta area really need? And the whole state of Maine, for that matter?

Why, an Apple store, of course! ☀

# Upcoming Programs

April 11	Demonstration of MARVEL research service by Patrick Groleau and demonstration of Smart Board by Dianna Mullins. <b>Meeting to take place at Lawrence Jr. High School in Fairfield, see email for details.</b>
May 16	Rob Darby demonstrating camera RAW, with special attention to sharpening.
June 20	Sue Westlake demonstrating Excel functions, plus Pizziz.

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