



ELECTRONOTES

WEBNOTE 57

8/20/2019

ENWN-57

Assuming – Winding Down

-by Bernie Hutchins

We have made no secret of the fact that we are working to “close down” Electronotes operations – leveling off paper inventory and selling it off to recover the investment. After 47 years, even if we last a few more years, the end will be (relative to that 47 years) “sudden”. Not tomorrow though! And I honestly have no estimate to offer. No one has offered any realistic (or properly informed) business plan for taking over, and I don’t see how anyone could (or would ask for the hardship). Too much work for very little return. This has not meant that people have not offered suggestions – too many of which are based on their **FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS**, some of which were previously addressed:

<http://electronotes.netfirms.com/en200.html>

<http://electronotes.netfirms.com/ENWN34.pdf>

<http://electronotes.netfirms.com/ENWN49.pdf>

while some more discussion relate to a SYNTHDIY exchange of June/July 2017,

<https://synth-diy.org/pipermail/synth-diy/>

which I hope to resolve in this note, and a few more recent email exchanges.

In November of 2016 orders (while as always - relatively few) abruptly doubled, and leveled off at about 250% of what they had been for 10 years. [Draw your own conclusions.] Wish it had been 10 years earlier - when I retired from teaching! So it seemed worth staying in business a bit longer to recover more inventory costs.

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POSTED EXPLANATIONS

Three previous EN postings of our own and a link to the Synth-DIY (many comments by myself and by others) are found above.

Who among us has not gotten into difficulty by ASSUMING some things that failed in light of reality, particularly with regard to details of complex matters?

Currently Electronotes can be divided approximately into two parts: (1) the free online (you're welcome) and largely more recent (last 15 years) part which is often "digital only" or scanned paper originals (PDFs), and the older (back to 1972) paper-only offerings for which we necessarily charge what is a quite modest fee. The free items posted on my EN site are examinable and likely need little further description.

Those who ordered the "Everything" package (paying nearly \$400 – of which there is relatively little profit once we allow for inventory replacement) received a stack (in three 5" Priority boxes) slightly over 12" high. That's double sided, so is approximately 6500 printed sides. If single sided, the stack would be two feet tall. Some folks reading here might assume I have such a stack of some 6500 pristine "originals" for photocopying (or scanning, even OCRing). I wish! I don't. Some 45 years of changing technology (and other exigencies of issue-by-issue survival) have obtained.

OCRs AS A NON-STARTER

In June/July of 2017 there was a many-part exchange in SYNTHDIY [<https://synth-diy.org/pipermail/synth-diy/>] with regard to whether a possible OCR version of EN could be done. NO IT CAN NOT. On a two-page test, the best OCR (so claimed), actually GENERATED some 25 errors:

ORIGINAL:

<http://electronotes.netfirms.com/AN23.PDF>

BEST OCR – Errors in Red:

<http://electronotes.netfirms.com/AN23Rob.PDF>

of varying degree of seriousness, that where not in the original.

Okay – we expect OCR errors. This means that the “information content” of the product necessarily degrades. Well - you just proof-read and fix by hand. Who does? Why “volunteers” of course! Those who advocated an OCR attempt felt there were possibly three errors (as though 3 new errors is acceptable if the font quality is improved; style over substance) – and when I said there were 25, no one took the trouble to check. One said “Thanks for the challenge Bernie but no thanks. I don't have the patience to correct the OCR,” and I posted the solution. Not even 2 pages!

Correcting OCRs, like all “proof reading” is at best tedious. It took me 18 minutes (half the time I had to check the original PDF scan) - and I wrote it. A “volunteer” would likely have to just mechanically go word-by-word if not letter-by-letter.

This “exercise” showed TWO THINGS CLEARLY. (1) OCR is no sense better if we are interested in preserving accurate information. (2) The “warm-fuzzy” notion of a group effort is just so much BS (considering 6500 pages).

ORIGINALS

I have long insisted that any digital version of Electronotes be derived from the best possible originals - reasonable enough. How much of a pile would this be? As suggested above, a minimum of 6500 sheets of paper or about 2 feet high – if everything were simply typed/drawn. In many or most cases however, material is pasted-up and/or taped-up so that pages are double thickness (a four-foot pile now). This additional thickness and/or pasted-up correction words was not an issue when originals were laid individually “on the glass”, but both are if we try auto-feed. With all this, and allowing for envelopes and file folders, etc., we are talking five file drawers of materials, with some missing, others in nebulous older, and many in unpredictable repair. [Contrary to a sometimes-stated ASSUMPTION that I must have digital scans of everything, (else how do we reprint?), many items have never been reprinted. They have not seen any machine since the old Xerox 3600 copier we rented.]

So – scanning from the “best originals” is not going to happen – absent a very significant influx of fund and time. Not Me! If you feel a “crowd-source” or “go-fund-me” is certain, go to your bank and get an upfront business loan on that basis.

Is there a “next-best” source of pages to scan? Some folks here have suggested I just open up an “everything” pack and run it though my high-speed auto-feed scanner. What could possibly be wrong with that – aside from scanning Generation 2 to Generation 4 versions?

(1) I don't have a high-speed two-sided scanner. People who claim they do usually (not always) mean they have access to one through their company/institution. I can not use these even if the best possible scans are done. See ownership/copyright issues below.

(2) Because the paper "for-sale" copies were printed over many decades and by differing equipment, many pages that are quite legible (to the eye) are of quite variable contrast and would need individual scan adjustments so as not to grey-in or fade-out. This happens in the general case unless scanned from a true full-contrast original.

(3) Similarly, in an effort to darken a scan, there is a corresponding tendency to "pull through" the back side of two-sided pages as an annoying mirror image.

(4) Time required! People have claimed that they could scan the full set in an hour or two. Perhaps. But as others on Synth-DIY well noted, that is just the smallest beginning of obtaining a digital version. As would be the case, even if we used the best true-originals, there is the problem of the grouping of the scanned pages that comprise each individual item and the corresponding unique naming of files. (Presumably we don't scan all 6500 pages into one PDF.) There are something like 700 items which would have to be divided (during scanning or editing) and saved. And would the file be named just by serial number (e.g., EN#45, AN-220, etc.) or is there an actual title or some indication of content implied by the file name? The **POINT** is not that this would be a considerable task that comes just with the scanning of a for-sale version, but IS the major time-consuming pain in the ass of the whole scan effort. So why would anyone expend the effort on what is guaranteed to be a second-rate end product (at best).

No one has made a serious offer to take over this job.

Ownership of Digital files.

In connection with scanning from a for-sale copy, one person commented on Synth-DIY.

I work at a university. Our department has two big copy machines. I could feed 100 pages of Electronotes in and have a PDF of it on my laptop in about 2 minutes. I may do this for some things, because I like to read this stuff when I travel and I can't really carry 6000 pages around Europe or South America in my carry-on luggage.

Basically, I'd be happy to do this just for my own purposes, and then email the scan files to Bernie Hutchins for free. That's the context that's missing from ENWN49 -- he wouldn't have to pay anyone anything at all to do this. There are dozens of people out here in web-land that would do it for free just for yuks. I'm currently on sabbatical, so have lots of free time to stand at a copy machine.

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If you buy a paper copy of EN, and then decide to scan it and use the scan for your own use, that is apparently thought to be legal. You can't sell your digital copy or give it away to ANYONE – NOT EVEN TO ME. Why?

There is a four-way ownership issue here. (1) I own the intellectual property. (2) You own the CD/thumb/etc. and (more abstractly) the particular instance of the copy of the files (thereon contained) IF INTENDED FOR YOUR OWN USE. (3) You have an interest in your time expended making the scan. (4) Your employer (owner or renter of the scan machinery) has paid a fee of course.

Another Synth-DIY commenter provided a link to guidelines from U.B.C., a location which it turns out is particularly appropriate to the commenter volunteering to scan ENs and send them to me:

<https://copyright.ubc.ca/guidelines-and-resources/copyright-guidelines/>

Reproduction for Private Purpose (aka 'form-shifting exception'):

- An individual may reproduce, for a private purpose, any work, if the source copy was legally obtained and the individual does not circumvent an access Digital Lock (see above) in order to reproduce the work. For example, this allows you to copy a song purchased from iTunes from your computer onto a device, such as an iPod, or files from a legally purchased CD to your computer. This exception does not allow you to:
 - copy songs onto a CD or mini-disc (or any other audio recording medium);
 - give the reproduction away; or
 - keep the reproduction if the original version is given away, rented or sold.

This is confusing. [Does it not imply only copying to a computer?] But it does seem to differentiate between making and retaining a copy (not creating an additional "owner") and giving the copy to someone else (a new owner).

A third commenters (also from B.C.!) added:

I'm sorry to have to be blunt, but what you wrote in that earlier comment was:

> And I could not use them in a commercial release because I did not pay him

That is simply wrong.

If you think you're morally obligated to pay for anything you use in your business, fine, you can live your life that way. But don't claim that it is a legal requirement about which you have no choice. It isn't, and you have a choice.

***** at *****@*****.bc.ca

People before principles.

WELL **EXCUSE** ME! How kind of you to allow me the “choice” of being **ethical**. Exactly what does the tag “**People before principles**” mean? Does it explain your invective against behaving in a way any one individual perceives as required honesty?

A fourth commenter said:

*D****'s offer looked like a genuine, generous and valuable one to me.*

Possibly. But in addition to offering his time, he is offering his employer’s property.

A fifth commenter responded to a follow-up from the commenter who offered the free use of his university’s machinery (in brown).

*> 1) Nobody at my university would care about me making scans --
> copies, maybe, if I didn't pay for them out of my own account, but
> scans don't cost anything.*

The for-mentioned fifth commenter replied (in green):

*they probably do indeed pay for the scan to file feature, but not per page. I doubt they own this equipment. Do they?
Pretty sure someone other than you pays for this equipment. Of course I don't think it really matters here, as it doesn't cost them more if more pages are scanned.*

Seriously, I would expect that any copy/print shop scanned all this to file (PDF) in the last 10-15 years. No one is putting that large of a document through a feeder over and over. The DOC must be on file now as a PDF(even if they don't tell you that) you may have to pay to get that PDF, but they have it. Copy machines now scan once to pdf or similar. It's on file/ on demand.

Two very good points follow from what this last commenter said:

- (1)** The scanning effort and the resulting electronic file has a monetary value as soon as it is generated by the machinery (owned/rented) by a copy-shop/institution/company.
- (2)** It is of course true that my (excellent) printer has digital copies of many of the items I sell. (They do NOT have digital copies of many other items simply because they have never been reprinted.) If I know they previously printed some item, I just phone them an order. If I know they haven’t, I probably need to dig out an envelope of originals and a roll or two of “Magic tape” and face a sometimes tedious repair effort of pages that have not been out of the envelope for decades. Realistically, only I can prepare these original originals. [The printer scans from (usually) such originals.]

So, while my printer owns digital scans, they would never claim any copyrights or make anyone a copy except me. And while I am well-aware that they have high-quality digital scans of many files, those files are theirs, and I would never ask for a file without agreeing to pay.

The conclusions of (1) and (2) is that, while not mine, a significant body of quite acceptable scans of EN exits, in very trusted custody: that of my printer – and it might be possible to work a deal with them – if a profitable (for them) business arrangement is realistic.

Key to even considering such an arrangement is the security (or more likely – lack thereof) of a digital version. Such protection would be essential (A) so that the printer having done considerable work won't find that they then sell a digital copy or two only to have it pirated and run wild a day later, and (B) so that the last people who bought a paper set from me (perhaps within a couple of years – some respectable time period) do not feel (as I would in their stead) cheated that others just stumbled upon (or searched out, or begged) a pirated copy. [Accordingly, there would be a period of time following the ending of paper sales where the charge for the digital EN set would be the current paper charge minus shipping.]

I invite thoughtful comments/ideas. But, please, no more comments about OCR, redrawing figures, scanning from salable copies, volunteers, HTML, etc. - - - or anything that requires my time and/or my money). I am interested in what you know – not what you assume or wish for.