

# The Great *Skeptic* CD Project

In January 2001 I found myself on the blower to Barry Williams. "I have made a video of James Randi's presentation from the world convention", says I "I've copied it onto a CD ROM for the Skeptics' archives".

"Oh yes... (Moriarty, we have a Charlie...)" says he, "You know, we've been meaning to make a CD of all the back issues of *the Skeptic* for some time. You seem like a chap who knows about this sort of thing."

The warning bells started.

"What do you think? Are you able to do this? Would that be hard to do?"

More warning bells.

"Yeah... that sounds like a great idea. I'd love to try."

The warning bells gave up and headed for some poor Skeptic about to debate the creationists in a small town church hall.



Richard Saunders is the Technology Consultant for the Skeptic and a member of the NSW committee.

I visited Barry and came away with a box full of back issues of *the Skeptic*, some with the ink fading away. Some had articles about pyramids; a few looked like they'd been found in one.

That's how it started: it will end sometime later this year when the Australian Skeptics release a CD ROM with all back issues of *the Skeptic*, starting with the very first issue from 1981 (wait until you see the picture of a young Dick Smith!) and ending with volume 20 number 4 from 2000.

Each issue has been carefully recreated from the original, complete with all photos, diagrams and cover art. The CD will function equally well on a PC or MAC and utilises a technology known as 'PDF' (short for 'Portable Document File'). Those of you who frequent the Internet may already be familiar with this technology. For those who are in the dark about it all, no need to worry as it's one of the simpler applications available. We shall also make sure the operation of the CD is as straightforward and simple as possible.

A major feature of the CD will be the search function. At any time you will be able to search **all** back issues at once for a single word or phrase. I think you will find this invaluable, far easier than searching for a word or article by 'flipping' through each issue, page by page, which would take hours. You will also be able to use this feature to search for your favourite author: Bob Nixon, Colin Keay, Sir Jim R Wallaby, Richard Lead ... the list goes on and on. (With

a few words from Barry Williams thrown in for good measure.) Once found, you will be able to print the article or copy it into your word processor. You'll never lose an argument again!

One of the pleasures of doing the CD (in fact maybe the only pleasure) is the chance to read and re-read the back issues of *the Skeptic*. I've lost count how many times I've thought to myself, "I must remember this article — it's a killer!" Twenty years of wonderful, interesting, witty, outlandish and just plain hilarious items and articles will be at your fingertips.

The Great Skeptic CD Project is only the beginning. I hope more and more information of interest to subscribers, be it text and photos or even videos, will soon be available on CD ROM. )

I trust I have been able to whet your appetite. The Luddites among you might even consider buying a computer just so you can use this CD!

## Note

People would like to help with proofreading should contact us. We can make a CD with 4 issues and send it off, or we can email them to you.

Proofreaders must be able to use the CD, print out the issues, proof them with a red pen and send the print-outs back for us to make the changes. We'll even give you a credit in the finished product.

