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Dec. 01, 2008

*From the December 2006 Issue*

[Note: The review of [BNA's Fixed Assets DesktopPro](#), which received a 5-Star rating, was inadvertently omitted from the print version of this review section. It has been added to the reviews listed below.]

I would be the first to admit that in the past, when it came to fixed asset accounting and related depreciation, I was a mountain man. I did not need any help back then; I could remember all the tax depreciation methods, conventions, useful life and the many special rules, etc.

For those of you who have never been afflicted with “mountain man spotted fever,” I will be happy to clue you in. A mountain man (or woman) knows all and can do it all — we learn everything once, we know all the answers, we never forget and we do not need any help! Applied to accounting work dealing with fixed assets and depreciation, we have a full deck of 52 cards, thank you very much.

Actually, the truth is, I used to be a better (tax depreciation) mountain man than I am today. In the 1970s, I started out using declining balance, sum of the year's digits and straight-line methods for tax depreciation. Bonus depreciation was easy to deal with. Later in 1981, I had to learn and add the ACRS rules — the Accelerated Cost Recovery System. Then, in 1987, they added the Modified ACRS — or MACRS — rules.

My bag of tricks began to bulge. Bonus depreciation had evolved to Section 179, and it only applied to certain types of assets. The listed property rules could really complicate things. Not to mention that this class life “thingee” could be very difficult to deal with, even when you could figure out which assets

were in which class or which assets had no class life! Then Congress brought

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Class Life ADR System, which could be found in different locations strewn on or behind my desk!

Well, the secret is out. We are officially in an era of smart depreciation software. Actually, we should call it smart-ER software. Software that is windows-driven and takes advantage of the environment, with intuitive movement from field to field via the Tab or Enter key. Software vendors have been quick to recognize the dilemmas facing accountants. Now, the mountain people can select from drop-down menus with oodles of depreciation methods and related conventions, enough to cure the afflicted party of this dreaded ailment.

However, we all know that tax depreciation is not the ONLY reason to buy a fixed assets program. Auditors and accountants who maintain in-house accounting systems will quickly tell you that it is not ALL about tax depreciation. It seems they have to deal with the new detailed requirements of Sarbanes-Oxley, SOX for short. Tilt! SOX has created a completely new ballgame with respect to fixed asset accounting needs, or so it seems. SOX was passed to improve corporate accountability and financial transparency. The mandate for fixed assets accounting: Public companies must document their inventory of fixed assets and related acquisitions and dispositions. Likewise, auditors must study and report on the effectiveness of the system of internal control over fixed assets.

More work, performed by in-house staff and auditors alike, will be required to document and reconcile changes in fixed assets. For example, SOX requires that write-offs and related inventory reconciliation and adjustments be performed on a quarterly basis. Barcode scanning features and inclusion in inventory records

of digital photographs are not on a wish list somewhere, they are necessary

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financial reporting and corporate governance practices are measured. Now it seems that everybody is getting into the act, including private boards of directors, bankers, etc.

So how does all of this affect the small business client down the street? You know, the one who just wants to maintain a relatively simple fixed assets system with tax and book depreciation, the latter for his financial reporting. And let's not forget the depreciation schedules that are maintained in the accountant's office that may not be the cleanest or most accurate. No serial numbers, no photos, no barcode scanning, no user-defined reports, etc.

**Question:** Does the small business client need to document his system better?

**Reply:** Yes. If we can document the asset management system better, we will know more about the inventory of assets on hand — the inventory will be more accurate. How can we truly determine which asset remains after a disposal? After all, they were both called computer!

While I am pleased to report that many of the vendors of fixed assets software available today have done much to relieve the “depreciation rules overload,” it seems that our newly found documentation concerns (and new-fangled best practices) require us to look beyond the current depreciation schedule. How can we migrate depreciation data in fulfilling the call to better document the existence of fixed assets? Does a fixed assets audit trail exist? Logically, accountants will need to look to their present software vendor and to others in the marketplace in order to determine which fixed assets offering will best suit information reporting needs.

To that end, we offer to you the following reviews of fixed assets software

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stand-alone, server-based and web-based versions. BNA Fixed Assets DesktopPro, which is primarily geared as a stand-alone system, is reviewed here  
[Read Full](#)  
[Review](#)

### [CCH Tax & Accounting — ProSystem \*fx\* Fixed Assets](#)

Designed as a stand-alone system and as an integrated part of CCH's ProSystem *fx* suite, ProSystem *fx* Fixed Assets offers users a comprehensive system for the management of fixed assets.  
[Read Full](#)  
[Review](#)

### [Comprehensive Microsystems, Inc. — CMI Fixed Assets](#)

Comprehensive Microsystems' THE SYSTEM was recently renamed CMI Fixed Assets, and provides a comprehensive and intuitive fixed asset management and depreciation system for business and nonprofit entities.  
[Read Full](#)  
[Review](#)

### [Intuit — ProSeries Fixed Asset Manager](#)

Designed to take advantage of its integration with the ProSeries professional tax preparation programs, ProSeries Fixed Asset Manager (FAM) also runs as a stand-alone system. FAM provides traditional asset depreciation with support for multiple depreciation books..  
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### WorthIT Fixed Assets

WorthIT Fixed Assets provides fixed asset management, depreciation calculations, forecasting and analysis, and capital budgeting capabilities, along with lease analysis and management functions available in WorthIT Capital Advantage Suite.

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[Review](#)

### Pro-Ware — Asset Keeper

With 40,000 users and over 22 years in business, Asset Keeper provides and supports small to midsize businesses and tax and accounting professionals providing asset management services. Version 22 will debut for 2007. Asset Keeper is reasonably priced at \$599, but don't let its price fool you. This is not a low-budget program.

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[Review](#)

### Real Asset Management International

#### — Asset Station

Real Asset Management International has a long history of providing fixed asset management software, having been in business for 25+ years, serving customers in 60 countries. Asset Station, which is reviewed here, is the little brother of the vendor's Asset4000 (a high-end asset management application).

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[Review](#)

### Red Moon Solutions LLC — Fixed Assets Manager

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Sage Software's FAS 100 Asset Accounting, a Sage FAS Fixed Assets solution, is a comprehensive fixed asset management solution designed to serve small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs). Sage Software offers additional Sage FAS Fixed Assets products that seamlessly integrate with FAS 100 Asset Accounting.

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[Review](#)

## Thomson Creative Solutions — Fixed Assets CS

Fixed Assets CS is the asset management and reporting component of Thomson Creative Solutions' integrated suite of professional accounting applications, integrating with Write-Up CS and UltraTax CS. Many readers will remember Fixed Assets CS as Depreciation Solution. Fixed Assets CS supports all depreciation methods.

[Read Full](#)

[Review](#)

## 2006 Review of Fixed Asset Management Systems — Executive Summary

This review conclusively confirms the fact that Fixed Asset software has entered a new age — a new age where software vendors, reacting to the needs of the marketplace, have redesigned and enhanced their fixed asset software offerings to meet the growing needs of users, and to better take advantage of technological advances in hardware.

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