

LEGWEAR TRENDS

& TEXTILES OF TOMORROW

JUNE 06 VOL. 47 NO. 06

SERVING THE HOSIERY AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES EACH MONTH



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PUMPS NEW SALES FOR
U.S. COMPANIES

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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council

It's almost like hearing the strains of "Happy Days Are Here Again" for the

first time. North Carolina is figuring how to spend a \$2.4 billion surplus.

First the governor presents his plan. He wants teachers to get an 8 per cent

would be no rollback. The state sales tax would be reduced from 4.5 per cent to 4.25 per cent.

Businesses would get a break with the sales tax on research and development equipment being reduced from 7 to 1 per cent. As an incentive to the growing NASCAR industry, there would be a sales tax exemption on parts and equipment purchased by motor sports teams.

State budget officials have cautioned legislators not to get too excited. Of the \$2.4 billion, only \$678 million is recurring money and that figure next year will be about \$700 million.

Of course, the governor's plan is just a proposal. The Senate produced another version which now is being tweaked by the House leaders. The governor's plan will

to Democrats.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent just to defeat former Co-Speaker Richard Morgan in Moore County. Others who fell to Pope's army were Rep. Rick Eddins of Wake and Stephen LaRoque of Kinston. Two years ago, several other allies of Morgan were defeated as a result of Pope's money going to opponents. So far, former House Speaker Harold Brubaker, a Morgan supporter, has dodged the bullet.

In 2003, an agreement between followers of Morgan and Democratic House Speaker Jim Black resulted in true bipartisan government with members of both parties crafting a budget and voting its approval. After the defeat of some Morgan allies in 2004, the co-speaker

The governor's plan would add 20,257 jobs in state government...

increase in salary with state employees getting 4 per cent. Teachers would be earning just above the national average. The salary adjustments and additional funding for community colleges and universities would represent \$1.2 billion more for education.

Some \$324 million would go to the state's rainy day account. Additional money also would go for road construction and repairs, capital improvements to state properties, and healthcare needs.

The governor's plan would add 20,257 jobs in state government, of which 13,000 are in public schools. Another 4,500 are in community colleges or the university system and 2,500 in the justice system or law enforcement.

The governor would cap the gasoline tax at 29.9 cents per gallon, but there

be manipulated and adjusted by legislators who have priorities. For instance, some want state employees to have the same salary increase as that given to teachers.

Note: It cost the state \$170 million for each 1 per cent increase given to teachers and state employees.

The recent Republican primaries sent a jolting message to incumbents and candidates. The long arm of conservative millionaire Art Pope can jerk you out of office.

Pope, a former legislator from Raleigh, has insisted, "If you run as a Republican you vote as a Republican." He defines what voting Republican means and that does not include reaching across the aisle

arrangement dissolved.

The defeat of Sen. John Garwood in the GOP primary in Northwest North Carolina involved the unusual efforts of congressional employees. Garwood angered ultra-conservatives in his party by not pairing his vote when the lottery was approved by the tie-breaking vote of Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue.

Employees in the office of U.S. Reps. Virginia Foxx and Patrick McHenry reportedly worked the district on behalf of Garwood's opponent.

Garwood was co-chair of the Education Committee in the Democratic-controlled Senate.



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HTC International Sales Pumps New Sales For U.S. Companies

Paul Folgeman, publisher

U.S. hosiery manufacturers are finding new opportunities in the global marketplace, thanks to an international sales program launched by the Hosiery Technology Center based in North Carolina.

Funded by a \$397,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce which was announced last October, the program is encouraging domestic manufacturers to seek business throughout the world. Directing the effort is Marc Swinnen, international sales manager, a native of Belgium and resident of Hickory, NC, who formerly serviced foreign markets for a North Carolina hosiery company.

In his role, Swinnen will do "as little or as much as mills want" in their initial efforts. He will follow up on sales leads. He will carry their catalogues and samples.

He will help with after-the-sale details, including freight-forwarding, letters of credit, and scheduling.

The best of all: there is no charge for the start-up efforts.

Swinnen, who joined the HTC staff in January, works directly with HTC Director Dan St. Louis and Tony Whitener. All hosiery or seamless products must be made in the United States. "The products must compete on quality," Swinnen asserts. "They cannot compete on price."

By mid-May, Swinnen's efforts had generated sales for five U.S. companies in foreign countries. Sales ranged from \$7,000 to \$50,000 just on the initial orders, he reported.

Swinnen and Whitener have made presentations to over 30 hosiery companies in Iowa, North Carolina and Alabama. These include manufacturers and marketers of promotion package goods, dress socks, sports/team socks, private label, branded, and children's socks.

Swinnen and Whitener, in their presentation, refer to the "Keys of Success": customer service and prompt follow-up; attractive and informative packaging; style information; competitive pricing; correct sizing information for a specific market; and products only made in the United States.

An example: men's socks usually are labeled size 10-13. In Japan and some other Asian countries men's hosiery must be labeled for smaller consumers or 9-11.

Swinnen's initial sales trip carried him to the leading commercial centers of the Far East, including Tokyo and Singapore among others. His second hosiery-selling foray will be to the Middle East—United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain. Next comes Northern Europe and Scandinavia, followed by South America.

The perception of American quality continues to be powerful in developing sales, Swinnen insists. While U.S. manufacturers lost ground in overseas markets during the last decade, Swinnen says that feedback confirms that importers are glad to see us back with quality products and competitive prices and with excellent service.

Whitener emphasizes that the new business being developed with Swinnen's help is new business for U.S. producers. "It is not business that was taken from some other

mill," he observes.

Swinnen's extensive experience and flair for multi-cultural business negotiations is expected to be an asset in the HTC's latest venture. He is fluent in Flemish, Dutch and French and conversant in German and Spanish. He is able to make the first-time exporting process less complex for U.S. mills.

Also a promising element in the international marketing program is the seal of quality designed for the HTC. Whitener says the use of the seal is being considered as a linchpin for the promotion of U.S. quality.

In the announcement of the grant from the Market Development Cooperator Program, James C. Leonard, deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Textiles and Apparel, outlined a goal for government's investment.

"This partnership reflects our commitment to opening new markets, developing better American jobs, and creating an environment for businesses to innovate, compete and prosper," Leonard said.

Leonard at that time also underscored the importance of the HTC role in the introduction of innovative products and confirmation of product quality through testing and certification. ■■■



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A First: U.S. Manufacturers Team Up For MAGIC Rollout

Paul Folgeman, publisher

American manufacturers of legwear and apparel are combining efforts to reach a worldwide market at the summer MAGIC gathering in Las Vegas.

Supported by marketing funds allocated by the U.S. Department of Commerce to the Hosiery Technology Center in North Carolina, some 16 domestic manufacturers will roll out made-in-the-USA products in a 900 square foot pavilion. It is the first undertaking of its kind on behalf of American companies.

Also sponsoring the effort are SEAMS, the national association for the sewn products industry and THA. The Textile Clothing and Technology Center (TC2) also will have a presence, according to Dan St. Louis, director of the hosiery center.

The categories being marketed include men's, women's, and children's dress, casual, outdoor, and sports specific socks and sheers as well as healthcare products.


Apparel categories will include women's upscale dresses, shirts, jackets, career wear, men and women's healthcare apparel, performance underwear, union suits, sporting goods, knit tops, tees, tanks, fleece, shorts and pocket tees.

Seamless apparel will be included in the presentations.

The biannual MAGIC event attracts tens of thousands of retailers, wholesalers and foreign importers. The message they will get: U.S. manufacturers can ship smaller orders and skus to match their needs.

Hosiery companies joining the venture include Johnson Hosiery Mills, Kentucky Derby Hosiery, Twin City Knitting, and Wells Hosiery in North Carolina; W.Y Shugart and Son and Wrights Hosiery, Alabama; Fox River Mills, Iowa; and Angel Hosiery, California.

Apparel suppliers are Carolina Apparel Group, Creative Outlet, and Cal Cru in North Carolina; A.S. Tees Manufacturing and Vinci Clothiers, South Carolina; Kellsport in Massachusetts; and Ultimate Sports and Apparel, Pennsylvania.

"The geographic proximity and rapid supply chain response of U.S.-based companies enable retailers to buy smaller quantities of colors and skus," according to St. Louis. "The goal is to explain to retailers advantages that can make them more successful—quick replacement of hot-selling items, increased sales due to fewer stock outs, ability to order smaller quantities, and reduced inventories and markdowns," he noted. 

legwear fashions

by CHARLENE NELSON,
Assistant Editor



Fashion Socks Offer Performance Appeal

Performance fashion will be a key trend for footwear in fall 2006, one that designers expect to see become more and

more important in the next few seasons.

Consumers who have grown to like sports socks that perform are looking for fashion footwear that also performs. And, sock manufacturers are responding with dress and casual socks that offer antimicrobial features once only found in sports socks.

Johnson Hosiery Mills is making dress socks for men with dri-release performance yarn.



Knee Highs Step Forward In Fashion Designs

With boots targeted as a hot fashion item again this fall, knee high socks to wear under them are also expected to have a good season. But, this year, the tried-and-true knee high will be stepping out in style sporting some hot new designs.


Knee highs are probably the biggest style in ladies dress socks for fall, say designers.

In conjunction with Steve Madden, Paul Lavitt Mills is making knee highs for the designer brand that “are taking knee highs to a different level,” according to Sherri Troup of

Paul Lavitt Mills.

“Steve Madden helped us a lot with the design and trends,” says Troup. “Like, a knee high has one rose on it which is vibrant and detailed. They are a shoe company so they look at what is going on with shoes.”

The socks sport striking designs and patterns on the welt that peek out over the top of the boot.

Gold Toe Brands has introduced for fall lightweight knee highs to wear under boots. The socks are lighter weight and come up over the calf with some incorporating novelty yarns and trendy designs. 



Stepping Out In Style: Fashion knee highs will be hot for fall. Socks by Paul Lavitt Mills for Steve Madden.

“As people are getting used to wearing functional fibers, they are going to demand them,” says Gold Toe Designer Matthew Mull. “It makes so much difference in how you look, how you feel and how you smell. It makes a difference.”

Another trend that is expected to come to the forefront and stay there is environmental sustainability: As consumers demand more environmentally-friendly products on all fronts, sock manufacturers are taking note and making socks that will comply with those demands.

“Sustainability is an initiative that many mass market retailers are leaning towards.

some of its fashion socks.

“To use those yarns outside sports socks is very new and is part of the movement to offer customers something beyond the basic sock,” explains Mull.

Moretz Inc. is again offering socks made of yarn from bamboo fibers, which it introduced for fall 2005 at Target, says Moretz Merchandiser, Leisa Job.

“Bamboo is a beautiful fabric, with a wonderful hand. Plus it has built-in features of sustainability, and the fiber itself naturally wicks and is antimicrobial,” explains Marshburn.

“Due to great customer acceptance, the program at Target continues, and

available for purchase by the consumer by late fall.

“Every pair of socks you buy saves the planet 400 gallons of clean water,” says Marshburn. “The sustainability initiative goes deep, and is a cultural initiative that is just now beginning to take root. Our objective is to continue with this environmental initiative and make it a natural part of our daily design routine.”

Johnson Hosiery Mills, Inc is making several lines of men’s dress and causal socks featuring antimicrobial treatments. And, Paul Lavitt Mills is introducing for fall its Donald Trump brand of men’s dress socks with CoolMax.

High-end men’s dress socks have been offering some antimicrobial features, but antimicrobial in women’s dress socks is a very new trend expected to grow.

People want eco-friendly and recycled products that are environmentally sustainable,” says Angie Marshburn. Merchandiser for Moretz Inc. “This initiative is relatively new in the mass markets, nevertheless, you are seeing it in apparel, accessories, foods and everything.”

High-end men’s dress socks have been offering some antimicrobial features, but antimicrobial in women’s dress socks is a very new trend expected to grow. Both Gold Toe and Moretz are stepping to the plate this fall and offering ladies dress socks with performance benefits.

For fall, Gold Toe is combining luxury wool blends that contain micromodal, which provides a very soft hand, with Outlast[®], a temperature control fiber. The result is a super-soft, high-end sock that not only is fashionable but that controls the temperature of the foot. The brand will offer the socks for both men and women in a variety of silhouettes. It is also using antimicrobial plated yarns in

in-fact, gains momentum from season to season. We are preparing to continue the Bamboo program at Target through the spring 2007 season, and hopefully seasons beyond,” adds Job.

“Bamboo also has been expanded into other retailer’s programs for fall 2006 and spring 2007. Our bamboo lines are custom designed to meet the styling and color requirements to achieve the needs of specific retailers. Each retailer has their own image which must be achieved at point of sale.”

Moretz also is offering the increasing number of consumers who want environmentally sustainable products a new line of socks made from eco-cotton. The Jim Tex fiber the socks are made from is made of recycled cotton. The cotton is made from waste from the manufacture of new cotton t-shirts. The recycled cotton fiber is also being used in apparel, home furnishings and a variety of other products. New lines are being launched for fall 2006, and can be

“This is a relatively new trend in men’s dress socks,” explains Jay Johnson, owner of Johnson Hosiery Mills. An increasing number of our socks feature Microban[®] antimicrobial. Each of us manufacturers is trying to provide additional value. It enhances the product.”

The company’s newest products debuting this fall under the Foot Comfort label are fashion hosiery for men made with dri-release[®] microblend performance yarn. The specially engineered blend of yarn wicks moisture and does not retain odor. The socks have a soft hand and are more comfortable than cotton socks, according to Jay Johnson. The socks will come in traditional men’s colors and traditional patterns.

The Donald Trump is a line of “sophisticated men’s dress socks for fall with features and benefits,” explains Sheri Troup of Paul Lavitt Mills. The socks are constructed of mesmerized cotton and CoolMax. They will come in basic colors and be sold in Department Stores. ■

**U.S. hosiery manufacturers going to MAGIC
Story in next month’s issue of Legwear Trends**

Hosiery Manufacturers Appeal To Consumers: “Save Our Sock Industry”

Charlene Nelson, assistant editor

A group of domestic hosiery manufacturers is taking its fight to save the U.S. hosiery industry to the streets. And, they are appealing to the people who can make a difference: consumers.

“Save Our Sock Industry... Look for the ‘Made in USA label when you buy socks,” says a billboard in downtown Greensboro.

The billboards are being sponsored by a group of sock manufacturers working together to make a difference by encouraging consumers to buy American and by lobbying Congress about trade issues affecting the industry. That group includes Pickett Hosiery Mills, Inc. of Burlington, NC and Harris & Covington Hosiery Mills of High Point.

The first billboard went up in front of the Greensboro News & Record. Shortly after the board went up, the newspaper took notice and helped to spread the word by publishing an article about the campaign. The billboard near Hickory went up later and was featured in an article in the Charlotte Observer.



beyond prices. The logistics of off-shore goods, the timeliness of receipt, the inventory levels that are required and quality issues. There are a number of issues that are not just related to the dollar price.”


The hosiery industry has been hard hit by the opening of borders to free trade. U.S. hosiery manufacturers make about 30 percent of socks sold in the country compared to 73 percent in the year 2000.

“We feel there is some momentum for the consumer to buy American-made products. They are seeing the loss of jobs certainly and the increased costs of gas and utility prices,” says Nim Harris President of Pickett Hosiery. “They are in the mood to buy American and we certainly want to encourage them to do that.”

The manufacturers have been working together for the past year to lobby Congress about free trade legislation. They have employed Washington Lobbyist Jim Schollaert and have been e-mailing and calling state and national representatives about trade issues.

“On the Congressional side we, as voters and employers representing thousands of families, want to create awareness with our representatives, those who make decisions affecting trade issues,” says Frye.

The group also used billboards in its efforts to fight the passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Two years later, it is using them again: to enlist the help of the buying public to combat the effects passage of that agreement and others have had on industry. Their message is clear: Support our Economy: Buy American. 

There are community issues relative to improving our community and having a better place to live and work and educate our children.

The manufacturers want consumers to realize that although foreign-made goods may ring up at lower prices at the cash register, buying foreign-made products versus American-made is costing the U.S. economy and our way of life. When Americans buy foreign products, they send money and jobs overseas. That has long-ranging effects as factories close, people lose their jobs and therefore have no money to spend. As the money goes overseas, our communities and way of life are affected by the loss of revenue. Buying American-made products helps preserve jobs and keep the money at home.

“Our issue is to create awareness that there are other choices and that there are issues that go beyond just strictly the price of a product. If somebody doesn’t have job or is working at a reduced level of income, I don’t care what the product costs, they can’t buy it,” explains Darrell Frye, CFO of Harris & Covington Hosiery Mills. “There are community issues relative to improving our community and having a better place to live and work and educate our children.

“From a manufacturing retail side, there are issues that go

New American Hosiery Sales Campaigns Set For Legislators

Paul Folgeman, publisher

North Carolina legislators will learn how the state's hosiery producers are taking aggressive marketing strategies to solidify their future.

Senators and representatives attending a June 21 breakfast and displays associated with "Hosiery and Textiles Day at the Legislature" will hear stories about the success of the new international sales program at the Hosiery Technology Center.

Also on the agenda for the breakfast will

be the "buy American" program initiated by companies in North Carolina featuring Uncle Sam on outdoor boards.

The annual event is sponsored by the Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council, chaired by Darrell Frye, vice president of Harriss and Covington Hosiery Co. in High Point. Exhibits by the Textile Technology Center of Gaston College and the Hosiery Technology Center will be featured.

The international sales program at the HTC is funded by a Market Development Cooperator Program in the U.S.

Department of Commerce. Since January, the program has landed new sales for mills in North Carolina, Iowa and Alabama.

The HTC receives \$500,000 from the North Carolina legislature each year. It also operates a self-supporting testing laboratory for retailers and manufacturers throughout the United States. ■

NILIT Of Israel Acquires Torcidos Ibericos In Catalunya

Nilit, a global leader in the production of nylon 6.6, based in Israel, has announced that it has acquired the texturing facility of Torcidos Ibericos in Puig-Reig (near Barcelona).

The primary goal of the acquisition will be to serve Nilit's European customers, but the operation will also support Nilit's activities throughout the world. The new Company will be called: Nilit Iberica.

Nilit's decision to invest in texturing in Europe places Nilit at the forefront of the World's specialty yarn manufacturers. The deal will significantly increase Nilit's texturing capacity and will provide customers with the usual high quality and custom-made solutions they are accustomed to from Nilit.

Nilit has been very pleased with the warm welcome and encouragement it has received from everyone in Catalunya, from labor, from the government of Catalunya and from the textile industry in Catalunya. The industry has suffered over the past few years and Nilit hopes that the demonstration of its confidence will make some small contribution to the resurgence of apparel manufacturing in Catalunya.

"Nilit prides itself on its commitment to its employees and its customers and looks forward to working with both groups in developing the business at Puig-Reig," Arie Gottlieb, General Manager of NILIT added. ■



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Birthday For HTC In 1989 At Opryland USA

June 1989 should go down in the books as the birthday of the Hosiery Technology Center.

The place: Nashville, Tennessee in the elegant surroundings of the Opryland Hotel where some 40 executives representing the leadership of the Carolina Hosiery Association (then the CVHA) adopted creation of the center as a goal.

Ray Thomas, president of the association, urged adoption of the goal which came from a study committee headed by Debbie Price of ILG (then Neuville Industries). Others on the committee were Elsie Childres, vice president of Arlene Hosiery; Hugh Simmons, president of Socks and Things Inc., and Jerry Thompson, Catawba Valley Community College.

News coverage of the annual planning retreat gave less attention to the concept for the technology center and more toward labor relations. What dominated discussion was the changing environment in the retail sector and the need for manufacturers to “partner with retailers who implementing new buying and merchandising strategies.”

The Marketing Committee of the CHA was instructed to develop strategies for more communications with retail merchandising managers and the International Mass Retailers Association (IMRA). “Fierce competition among various classes of retail trade has resulted in new demands being imposed on vendors, including hosiery...we can adjust to those demands more effectively if we are brought into the procedures in the conception stage,” the 1989 strategies document asserted.

The concept for the hosiery technology center was modeled after a furniture technology center already in operation at CVCC. Training of people for knitting technician positions was to be the top priority. A relationship between the technology center and retailers was not on the radar screen.

The retreat in Nashville was memorable because of the charter buses and the networking during the five-hours trip from Hickory, headquarters for the CVHA. The trip was coordinated by Linda York, now at the Hosiery Technology Center. She was


assistant executive director of the CVHA at the time.

In June 1989, it was announced that the ebullient socks designer Eric Smith would be featured at the 1990 Focus



marketing workshops. Smith's out-of-the-box approach to merchandising—including bags shaped like a sock—would challenge sales and marketing executives.

Seventeen years ago the NAHM was reporting there were 326 companies manufacturing U.S. hosiery, of which 77 per cent made socks and 23 per cent were in the sheer business. However, the sheer mills were shipping 51 per cent of the volume.

NAHM also reported that U.S. hosiery companies employed 68,500 people, half of which were in North Carolina. Average annual consumption of hosiery products in 1989 was 16.1 pairs with women consuming 19.7 pairs of sheer products. 



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Seamless Symposium Planned for 2007

On the heels of the seamless apparel industry's first Seamless Symposium plans are being made to hold another symposium in 2007.

Industry representatives met recently to discuss the success of the 2006 symposium and begin planning a similar event for March 2007.

Seamless manufacturers as well as yarn and equipment vendors who gathered at the Hosiery Technology Center in Hickory for the meeting agreed that the symposium was very beneficial to the industry and that the symposium could well become an annual event.

"We have had a lot of very positive feedback from symposium attendees and have been approached by several people about having a Seamless Symposium in 2007," Charlene Nelson, symposium coordinator told the group.

Because there is a lack of understanding of seamless products and the technology behind them among many retailers and consumers, the symposium could be an avenue for providing the information manufacturers and retailers need to better

understand the products, the group said.

Holding break-out sessions on different topics would be one way of doing that suggested David Morgan of Dialogue Power Consultants, LLC. Those groups would also provide excellent networking opportunities, he said.

The group agreed that the 2007 symposium should expand the trends presentation to include a more global look at trends in the seamless industry and that the fashion show part of the symposium also should be expanded to include a larger range of products from a variety of seamless manufacturers.

Although the 2006 symposium was a success, Nelson told the group that the 2007 will be bigger and better. A steering committee of industry representatives will be formed to help plan the symposium.

"This was our first symposium and the response to it was much larger than we anticipated it would be," said Nelson. "In 2007, we want to enlist the support of the seamless industry and suppliers to that industry so that it will be a benefit to those attending and help grow the industry." ■■■

Company To Close Sock Plant

HICKORY – Kentucky Derby Hosiery will close its plant here, laying off 99 people.

The Mount Airy-based sock maker said the majority of its Hickory work force will be laid off on Aug. 4, although about 10 employees will be retained for several months as customer orders are filled.

Company officials said the decision was driven by competition from low-cost imports.

"We realize the impact of this difficult decision on our dedicated employees, their families and the community," said Bill Nichol, Kentucky Derby Hosiery's president and chief executive officer.

"We will make every effort to assist our employees during this transition period."

Michael Albright, director of human resources, said the company will seek help for its Hickory employees on the state and federal levels, including Trade Adjustment Assistance benefits.

Kentucky Derby Hosiery has operated in Hickory for 40 years. Its current facility is on Old Lenoir Road, SW.

The company, which will employ approximately 1,150 people after the Hickory layoffs, also has facilities in Mount Airy and in Virginia and Kentucky. ■■■

India Has Overtaken China In Textile Exports

India has overtaken China as exporter of textiles to the US and Europe markets due to a cap on Chinese textiles in those countries.

China's export in the last quarter of 2005-06 stood at nine per cent, while that of India was 13 per cent after the quota regime was abolished in January 2005 under the WTO agreement, Union Textile Minister Shankarsinh Vaghela said.

"The 10 per cent cap on Chinese textile exports will continue till 2008. This has provided ample opportunity for India to establish herself in the export market and compete with China when cap on its textile exports would be lifted," he added. ■■■

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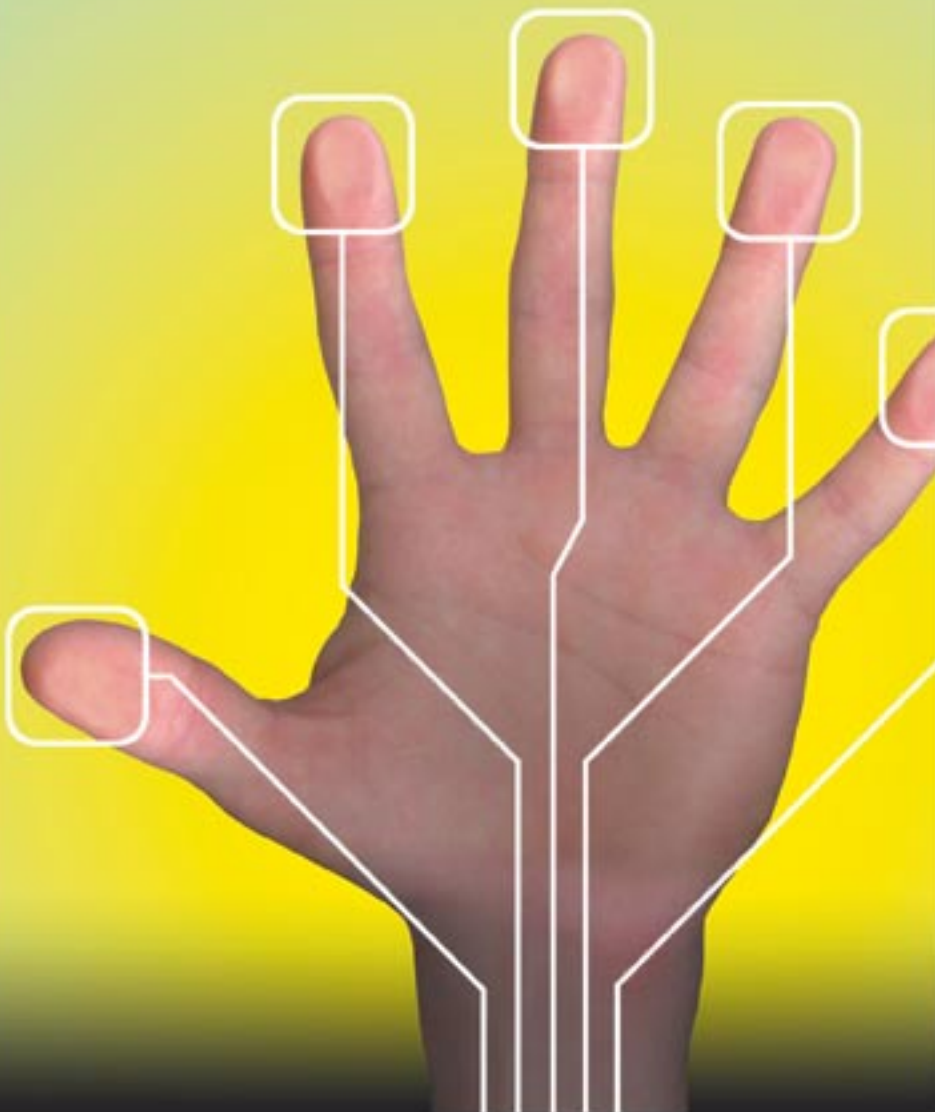
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