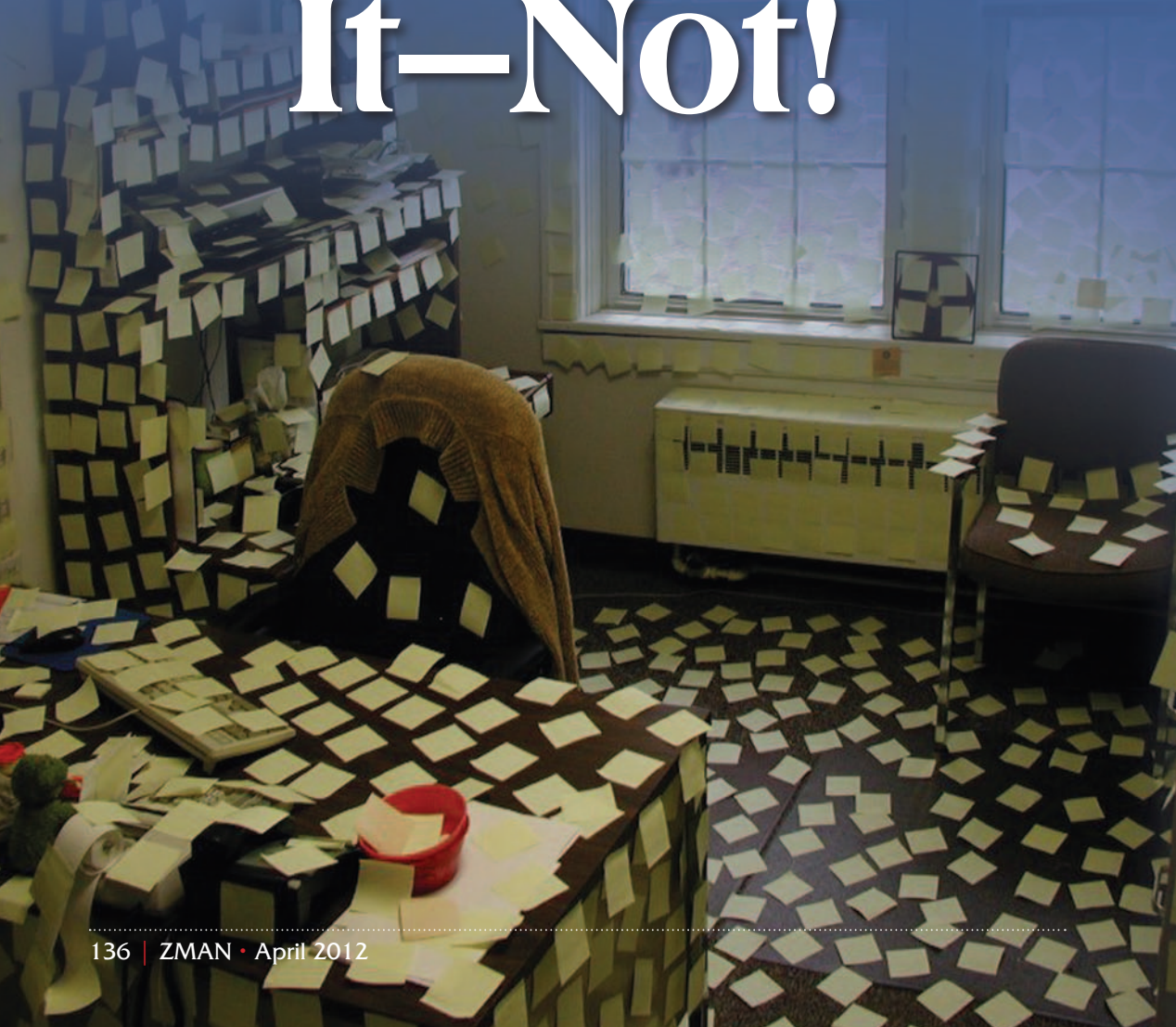
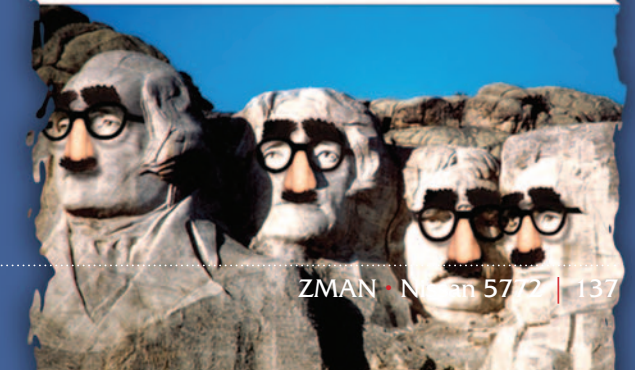
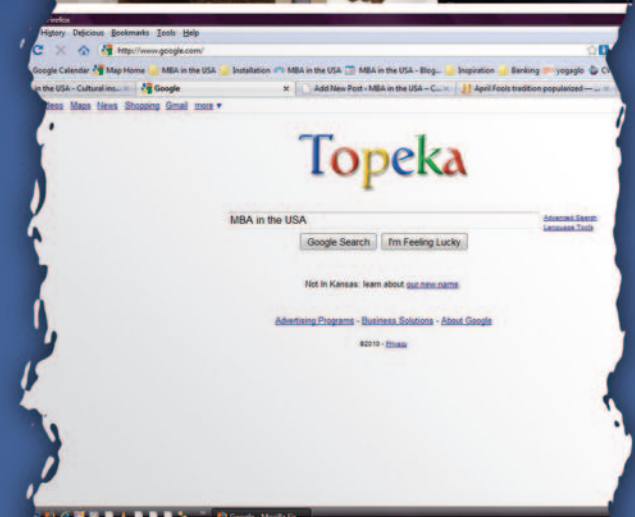


HAPPY APRIL FOOL'S DAY!

Take My Word For It—Not!

Millions of Americans and Europeans fall prey each year to the pranks, false rumors and tricks geared to take place on the first of April. Some of these hoaxes have even been sponsored by corporations or spread over news stations. Welcome to the April Fool's tradition of convincing people of things that never happened – and things that happened but no one believed them because it was April Fool's Day!

Aryeh Cohen



HAPPY APRIL FOOL'S DAY!

A couple of years ago on April 1, a startling development disrupted the business world. Google, the famous internet search machine, announced with much fanfare that it would be changing its name. As of April 1, it would no longer be called Google, but Topeka.

Why would Google, whose name is iconic in the world of computers, want to change its name? To honor the city of Topeka, Kansas. One month earlier, the mayor of Topeka, Bill Bunten, had issued a proclamation that his city would be changing its name to Google, Kansas, for the duration of March. Google—the company, that is—had announced that it would build fiber optic projects in several American cities and these cities would benefit greatly from improved search capabilities. The mayor of Topeka hoped to convince the executives at Google to install their very expensive fiber optic equipment in the city of Topeka... er, Google.

Google's executives were so touched by Topeka's decision, said a company spokesman, that they decided to change the company's name to Topeka. And the company began acting on the decision at once by switching the company's logo, changing all the company's signs and even its website to read Topeka instead of Google.

Of course, Google never planned to change its name at all. The entire story was a hoax, down to the pictures released by Google of how it was changing its signs at its corporate headquarters. It was nothing more than a joke that Google perpetrated at the expense of the general public.

If you were among those who were taken in, don't feel bad. It was April Fool's Day, and you would have been only one of the many victims of practical jokes done on that day.

Where Did The April Fool's Tradition Start?

The origin of the April Fool's tradition is shrouded in mystery. It is clear, however, that the tradition goes back centuries. The earliest recorded April Fool's prank dates



Google releases photos showing the company sign with a new name in honor of Topeka.

back to the year 1392.

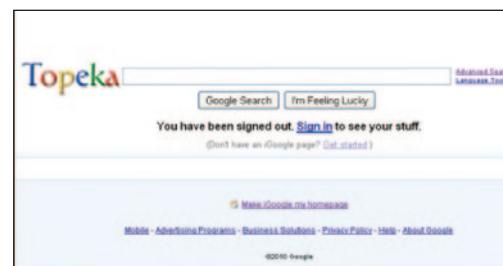
According to one version, the tradition resulted when the first day of the year was switched from April 1 to January 1. Many people were so accustomed to wishing each other a good year on April 1 that they continued to do so even after the change was effected. Because of their mistake they earned themselves the title of April Fools.

On April 1, 1983, the Associated Press asked Boston University history professor Joseph Boskin about the origin of the custom. He responded that the tradition began with Roman Emperor Constantine when jokesters in his cabinet declared that they were more capable of running the empire than he was. To disprove their claims, Constantine appointed one of his friends, a man named Kugel, Caesar for a day. That day was April 1, and ever since it has been a tradition to play jokes on people on that day.

This explanation was duly reported in dozens of American newspapers that were excited to have stumbled upon the true source of the April Fool's custom at last. Only weeks later did the editors at the Associated Press discover that they had fallen victim



Topeka, Kansas, the city that changed its name in honor of Google.



A screenshot of Topeka, the popular search engine formerly known as Google....

to an April Fool's joke themselves! It hadn't occurred to anyone to question the veracity of the story until someone at AP realized that "kugel" is Yiddish for a baked pudding, not the name of a Roman politician.

10 Most Famous April Fool's Jokes

Following is a list of several famous April Fool's pranks that confused millions of Americans and others over the years:

• Taco Liberty Bell

In 1996, Taco Bell, a Mexican-style restaurant chain in America, published an ad in the *New York Times* announcing that in order to lower America's tremendous national debt, it had purchased the Liberty Bell. This nationally famous historic bell resides in silent repose in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, near Independence Hall, ever since a large crack in its side rendered it inoperable. From now on, Taco Bell announced, it was to be called the Liberty Taco Bell.

It goes without saying that Americans were outraged. Thousands reacted by contacting their senators and representatives to express their disbelief that politicians would stoop to selling a nationally historic icon rather than buckle down their spending habits.

By noon the same day the Taco Bell franchise publicly acknowledged that the story was nothing more than a joke.

Curiously enough, when one naïve reporter asked White House Press Secretary Mike McCury what he had to say about the scandalous deal, the White House spokesman responded, "The federal government has sold not only the Liberty Bell, but also the Lincoln Memorial, which was sold to the Ford Motor Company, which plans to change the name to the Lincoln-Mercury Memorial...."

The Liberty Bell hoax is reckoned as a highly successful advertisement campaign for the Taco Bell chain. It cost the chain only \$300,000, but it brought in \$25 million in publicity. By the end of April 2, the \$300,000 investment had paid itself back many times over, as the chain reported an additional \$1 million in profits. In short, that April Fool's joke was one of the most successful advertising tactics ever.

The idea for the joke came from the mother of Taco Bell CEO John Martin. Experts believe that a similar trick today would not work, as the public is far more suspicious than it was and would not take such a statement at face value.



The Taco Bell ad (left) claiming that the company had bought the Liberty Bell (right) aroused a storm of protest.