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New Chips On The Block: SchmartBoard

By Charles Hansen

PHOTO 1: SCHMARTBOARD SURFACE



SchmartBoards are pre-traced printed circuit boards that are connectable like building blocks. They allow you to build electronic circuits block by block, and then connect the blocks together to form a functional board.

SchmartBoard is segmented into through-hole and surface-mount boards. In addition, they have a library of smaller I/O and power solutions. The boards are available in pre-defined combination packs or as individual units.

Because the boards are pre-traced (Photo 1), the need for wire jumpers is minimized, as opposed to breadboards or wire-wrap boards. The design process is quite simple:

- 1. Select boards**—Select the boards that you will need for the project.
- 2. Connect components**—Solder the components to each board. Segment your project into blocks to take advantage of the pre-routed traces on SchmartBoard. This minimizes the number of wires needed on each SchmartBoard.
- 3. Connect boards**—Using the Schmart-Bridge mechanical bridges, connect the boards together. There are two slots on each side of the SchmartBoard. The bridges have two notches that fit into the slots (Photo 2). This plastic piece, in conjunction with the holes on the sides of SchmartBoards,

allows you to physically connect SchmartBoards together.

- 4. Connect wires**—Connect the wires. They have included wires and male headers in the combination and multi-packs. Use the headers to connect the wires.
- 5. Test and make modifications**—You can make modification simply as needed. Use glue to make the connected boards more rigid. Do this only after you are satisfied with the final configuration.

SchmartBoard offers services as well as products. Once you are ready to take your SchmartBoard product to an actual PCB assembly, they can do it for you. Boards are priced from \$5 to \$48, depending on complexity.

The makers of SchmartBoard have a program to give free samples of the board, which can be found at http://www.schmartboard.com/index.asp?page=SchmartLAND_samples. There is also a contest where the company gives away six combination packs each month, at http://www.schmartboard.com/index.asp?page=SchmartLAND_contest. **aX**

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PHOTO 2: CONNECTING THE SCHMART-BOARDS.

