↑ PRinT SCreen
The Newsletter for the Stanford/Palo Alto PC Users' Group

Come to the meeting this month and see how this page was produced.

PRinT SCreen goes PUBLIC

CLUB NEWS

ReliefWare Auction a Success

The ReliefWare auction we held at our November meeting was a smashing success: we raised over $1500 for the victims of the October 17 earthquake. Both new and used software packages were auctioned, and wonderful deals were available. Borland, Lotus, Microsoft, Egghead, Computer Currents, 800-Software, and PowerUp Software all made generous contributions to the auction. We would like to extend our thanks to those who both bought and sold at the auction.

Microsoft Word SIG

The next meeting of the Microsoft Word SIG will be February 26 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at Tech-Mart. Please call Jan Altman at (408) 243-5955 for details.

Membership Renewals

For the two months preceding the expiration of your membership you will find a renewal envelope enclosed in your newsletter. Use this envelope to promptly send in your $25 check ($10 for students) so that you won't miss an issue of the monthly newsletter. A current membership card will then be sent to you in the next PRinT SCreen.

Goodie Coupons

Remember, the "Goodie Coupon" attached to your membership card is presently good for one free disk: the library catalog, Disk of the Month, or a blank disk. Trade in your coupon for a disk at a future meeting.

Floppy Disks For Sale

Xidex Precision disks are available for $6/box. High density floppies

Jan.-Feb Calendar

Jan. 31	Group Meeting	7:30
Feb. 14	Planning Meeting	7:30
Feb. 26	Word SIG	7:30
Feb. 28	Group Meeting	7:30

Next Meeting

Date:	Wednesday, Jan. 31
Time:	7:30 p.m.
Place:	Polya Hall, Turing Auditorium (Rm. 111) Stanford University

All members are welcome to attend the monthly planning meeting, where we make decisions on the future of the group. Call Beverly Altman, 329-8252, for the location of the next meeting.

are $10/box (10 disks). The catalog and the Disk of the Month will be offered for $1 a disk. If you wish to purchase disks at the meetings, you will need to present your membership card, so be sure to bring it with you.

Become a Writer

Please contact Becky Altman (326-8605) if you are interested in writing for PRinT SCreen.

It does not matter what your level of computer experience is; each of you has some information, knowledge or opinion that would be of interest to your fellow members. Review your latest software or hardware purchase. Tell us how you use the PC in your work and play. Help others avoid or solve problems you have encountered. Please submit the articles:

- WordStar or ASCII format.
- Single-spaced.
- Double-spaced between paragraphs.
- Any right margin.
- No centering or tabs.
- By the 15th of the month.

Classified Ads

If anyone has a used dot matrix printer he or she would like to donate for a write-off, please call 329-8252 and ask for Beverly.

Free Ads

Don't forget that as a member you are entitled to free classified ads in PRinT SCreen. If you have old/unused hardware or software, place an ad here. Members have reported good responses to their ads. ¶

This Month

The Speaker

Cheryl Downing of Xerox Corp. will demonstrate Xerox FormBase, a relational database that is so flexible that photos, signatures, and even thumb prints can be entered as data in fields. Completely graphical interface, very intuitive, highly acclaimed by all who have seen it.

Also, club president Rick Altman will use Ventura Publisher to show how PRinT SCreen is produced. For more information, see his View From the Top on page 4.

Program of the Month

A collection of four programs, Turbo-Copy, MasterMenu, Trivia, and the educational Castle, will be distributed this month. These four shareware programs come with a twist. Tune in on the 31st for more info. The disk will be available for $1 or you may use your Goodie Coupon.

The Giveaway

Our raffle this month features a copy of Xerox FormBase. All members who are current with their dues (if you received this newsletter in the mail, your dues are current) and who are present at the meeting at the time of the drawing are eligible to win.

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

Desktop Publishing Wants YOU!

by Rick Altman,
Club President

When our club welcomes in new officers in April, it will also be greeting a new PRinT SCreen editor and production manager. And while the planning committee has felt for the last year that a demonstration of desktop publishing would make for a good program, it is now particularly opportune.

I would like nothing more than to capture the fancy of one of you and be approached by a wide-eyed enthusiastic member who has been waiting for

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I have PRinT SCreen to thank for my accomplishments in desktop publishing. It was here that I really began to understand the foundation of electronic publishing.

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the excuse to learn more about this revolution in the printing industry.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that I have PRinT SCreen to thank for many of my accomplishments in DTP. While relatively small and simple in scope, this newsletter was my first. It was here with PRinT SCreen that I really began to understand the foundation of electronic publishing. My article in *Publish!* magazine entitled "Instant Newsletters—just add text" came straight out of my experience here.

That article led to several guest appearances at the Ventura Publisher User Group, the co-hosting of a two-day publishing conference in San Jose, and the authoring of two books on Ventura Publisher.

It is not my intention to brag; I just want members to know what tremendous opportunities, both in terms of business and pleasure, that await newcomers to desktop publishing. And there are fewer tasks as well-suited as an entré as a club newsletter.

After all, all you have to do to feel appreciated is simply put the darn thing out. Add a minimum of personality and thoughtfulness, and you're a hero. Typos are forgiven, wrong dates are overlooked (thank goodness—I had more than my share), and world-class writing skills take a back

seat to down-home friendly conversation.

And watching those fonts appear on your screen is indeed an exciting experience for anyone who has spent most of his or her time working in text-based, non-graphical programs.

Currently, the production of PRinT SCreen is a two-person job, although it hardly needs to be. Becky, as editor, gathers and writes the copy. She reads other user group newsletters for articles and ideas, she takes submissions from members (not very many though—hint, hint!), and she writes a column or two herself.

She stores these files on disk, any word processing format, and then delivers them to me. After a few practice rounds, Becky picked up on the things that she could do to make the production phase easier. Like dispensing with indents, hyphenations, centered headlines, justified text. You see, Ventura Publisher does all of these things automatically; they don't need to—and in fact shouldn't be—done at the word processor stage.

Becky also does a bit of "pre-tagging." When she knoww that a particular paragraph is destined to be a headline or subhead, she places a simple code next to it. For instance, the headline at the top of this article would look like this in the word processor:

@HEADLINE = Desktop Publishing Wants YOU!

That little code preceding the text is all that Ventura needs to set it bold and in bigger type.

By now, the format is pretty well established, and production is simply a matter of applying these paragraph tags to the right passages of text, and making sure that everything fits on the appropriate pages, and that the total page count is a multiple of four.

Adding graphics is both a chore and a treat. Occasionally, my creative well is dry and I grope around for ideas. I leaf through my catalog of clip art, hoping that something will catch my fancy.

Other times, ideas present themselves right away, begging to be used. In either case, merging the graphics into the newsletter is easy and fun. Ventura accepts graphic files as easily as it does text files, and once on the page, a picture can be sized, cropped, and scaled a multitude of different ways.

Today's graphic programs are so good, it's scary. And while just two years ago, printing quality graphics practically required a PostScript printer, today they look equally sharp on HP LaserJets, and even look respectable on dot-matrix printers. So don't think that you are not a candidate, just because you don't have a slick laser printer.

So while I have tried to avoid having this sound too much like a sales pitch, when you get right down to it, that's exactly what it is. I would like to see the PRinT SCreen tradition carried on, and equally important, I would like to see this opportunity be seized by the right person who has been looking for a reason to get involved in desktop publishing. ¶

Plug & Play PostScript Emulation

Dana B. Snow
Utah Blue Chips

Pacific Data Products' exciting new *PacificPage PostScript Language Emulation Cartridge* offers a unique and relatively low cost upgrade to PostScript capability for owners of Hewlett-Packard LaserJet Series II printers. The $695 PostScript language emulation cartridge looks like a standard LaserJet font cartridge and installs in the left-hand cartridge slot, providing 35 Apple LaserWriter II equivalent fonts and support for four downloadable, BitStream scalable fonts.

The cartridge works only in the LaserJet Series II and requires that the printer have at least 2 megabytes of add-in memory. It supports serial or parallel input from any MS DOS (IBM compatible) PC. The latter is clearly an artificial limitation due to the fact that the included disk and programs are in MS DOS format. The only other hardware limitation mentioned in the manual was incompatibility with some (unnamed) video graphic adapters and raster image cards.

Adobe PostScript emulation is provided through chips developed by Phoenix Technology, best known for their highly regarded IBM compatible ROM BIOS used in many PC clones.

The included 35 Apple LaserWriter equivalent fonts are from BitStream, a major player in the PC font arena.

The cartridge is sold in a vinyl storage case and comes with a diskette containing utility and demo files along with two manuals: the Application Setup and Printing Guide, and the Operators Guide. The application setup guide gives step-by-step instructions for configuring Ventura Publisher, WordPerfect 5.0, Microsoft Word 5.0, and Microsoft Windows (with a special section on Aldus Page-Maker) for PostScript output.

With the cartridge installed, the printer initializes in PostScript emulation mode on power-up or hard

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If you have an HP LaserJet II and want PostScript emulation, PacificPage deserves consideration.

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reset. Switching between PostScript emulation and PCL modes can be accomplished either through the printer's control panel or via escape-codes. Two batch files, PS.BAT and PCL.BAT, are included to allow switching from the DOS prompt. The escape codes may be used in those applications which allow the inclusion of a printer "setup" or "initialization string."

When switching to an alternate mode, the printer reinitializes in the new mode and all downloaded fonts are cleared from printer memory. If moderate to large numbers of downloaded PCL fonts are used,this precludes rapid switching between modes.

According to the manual, some printer spoolers (buffers) interfere with the use of the two included batch files, PS.BAT and PCL.BAT. We had no problems using LaserTorq, one of the more popular spoolers. We did encounter problems if the batch files were invoked or a print command sent while the printer was initializing in PostScript emulation mode. In most cases the printer would hang or we could get a page or two of PostScript code. When invoking the PCL mode, however, font downloading or printing could begin immediately.

The cartridge worked flawlessly with WordPerfect 5.0, Ventura Publisher and Arts &Letters, an MS Windows application. Where available, the Apple LaserWriter II NT/NTX driver was used, otherwise the application's generic PostScript driver was selected. In PCL mode the LaserJet functioned normally.

The Ventura Publisher printer Capability Page produced using the PacificPage cartridge was virtually indistinguishable from that generated by a LaserJet II equipped with the QMS JetScript, a licensed PostScript device. The only noticeable difference was in minute font details, because PacificPage uses Bitstream fonts and QMS uses Adobe.

Speed is an issue when in PostScript emulation mode. Pacific Data Products said the LaserJet/PacificPage prints at about 70% of the speed of the LaserWriter II NT, which is not the fastest of PostScript devices. At that, the 70% figure is optimistic. On the plus side, PCL capability, with the requisite availability of 2 megabytes for fonts and graphics, leaves PostScript in the dust when you don't need its features.

If pure PostScript capability and speed are your main concerns, you should look to buy other products. If you already have, or plan to buy, a LaserJet Series II and want to add economical PostScript emulation, PacificPage deserves consideration. The cartridge also provides an economical, albeit low-volume, way to proof documents destined for final output on high resolution PostScript compatible typesetters.

The PacificPage PostScript Language Emulation Cartridge retails for $695 and is currently being offered by mail-order houses in the $500 range. For more information see your dealer or contact Pacific Data Products at 6404 Nancy Ridge Drive, San Diego, CA 92121, telephone 619-552-0880, FAX 619-552-0889. ¶

PRTSC POTPOURRI

Free Technical Support at Ashton-Tate

After three years of offering only 90 days of free technical support for its products (dBase and MultiMate), Ashton-Tate is now providing unlimited telephone support. All you have to pay for is the long distance phone call. Another new offering is a toll-free automated "voice mail" system that will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With this system you can hear answers to frequently asked technical questions. Additionally, a toll-free bulletin board is available.

Corporate users can also purchase one of several extended support programs. With these programs you can get access to a toll-free number, high priority for responses, more experienced support technicians, and/or newsletters.

The Quality of 3.5" Disks

Bill Weil, San Francisco PCUG

The 360K floppy disk is so standard and so cheap that many people have been lulled into thinking that all floppy disks are good enough. According to a recent report, this is definitely not true for 3.5 inch disks. A company called Memcon tested 500 disks of a variety of brands and ran them through a series of tests. The table below is a summary of the results as reported in *Computer Reseller News*:

These ratings have a number of surprises. They do not seem to match the reputations for 5.25 inch disks. 3M and Dysan have always been considered premium name brands. I have never seen many of the top-rated brands.

Some of the disk vendors have challenged the accuracy of the results

Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
C.Itoh	Fuji	ASF	Memory	Dysan
IBM	Maxell	Brown	Media	
KAO	Polaroid	Centech	Opus	
Memorex	Sony	JVC	SKC	
TDK	Syncom	Kodak	Sentinel	
	Verbatim	Nashua	Wabash	
			3M	
			Xidex	

because the sample size was too small. I do not have enough experience with these disks to comment one way or the other.

[Editor's note: What kind of experiences have SPAUG members had with any of these disk brands? Either drop a note to me or bring it up for discussion at Random Access at the next meeting.]

Leave It On—Turn It Off

Hugh Bayless,
Monterey Bay PCUG

For a long time it has been accepted as gospel that computers should be turned on when you start to use them and not turned off again until you are through for the day. Everybody "knew" that turning computers on and off shortened their lives.

That was probably true in the early days (perhaps six or eight years ago), but today it is not necessarily true. There is certainly some thermal shock in a light bulb when it is turned on, but computers are not light bulbs, and the days of high-amperage surges from turning on computer power supplies are a thing of the past.

Rather than compare a computer to a light bulb, we should compare it to other electronic devices so common in our homes—televisions, microwave ovens, VCRs, and hi-fi systems. We turn these on when we use them and off when we are through with them. There are no manufacturers' warnings of dire consequences from not leaving our TV sets running constantly instead of switching them on and off as we do.

John C. Dvorak, the widely read columnist, advises people to turn off computers and other electronic gear when not in use. As he puts it, "...a machine that runs one hour a day will last 24 times longer than a machine that runs 24 hours a day."

More and more people seem to agree with his viewpoint. An electrical engineer with PG&E, Stan Miller, Jr., contributed an article to the Humboldt User Group Newsletter in which he said much the same thing: "If you plan on leaving your computer on to use it in the next half hour, I would say, leave it on and turn down the brightness control of the monitor. But if you are going to be away from your computer an hour or so, I would go ahead and turn if off."

What these gentlemen are saying makes sense to me. The life of a hard disk is given as MTBF (Mean Time Between Failure) and is measured in hours of operation. The less it runs, the longer it will last.

In the world of mainframe computers that took 30 minutes to boot, it was customary to leave them running all of the time. Today, with the modern, fast booting desktop PCs, that reasoning does not apply.

The argument will no doubt continue into the future—leave it on, turn it off. But, until I get advice I consider better than the foregoing, I shall turn my own computer off when leaving it for more than 10 or 15 minutes. I want my computer to last as long as possible.

PRTSC Potpourri

New Version of PC Tools

PCUG of the Redwoods

Just when you finally got used to your new PC Tools (version 5.1), a new version is out. Version 5.5 adds significant power to an already powerful package. The upgrade now features LAN support, text retrieval, and file viewers for 1-2-3, dBase, HEX, and ASCII. Also included is the ability to launch a program and load a specific file with one keystroke. The desktop manager can be resident using as little as 40K of RAM, while the PC Shell can get by with as little as 10K of RAM. Call Central Point Software at 503-690-8090 for information.

Abort, Retry, or Ignore?

Quad Cities PCUG

If you get this message from DOS when attempting to copy files from one drive to another, *do not* switch disks in the target drive and hit R for Retry. You will end up with a hopelessly scrambled mess on the disk.

Such a situation can occur if you try to copy onto a disk with the write-protect notch covered. The temptation would be to just insert a different disk and "Retry."

DON'T DO IT! When DOS prepares to copy files, it first reads the directory from the target disk. If you switch disks, it will write the in-memory copy of the protected disk's directory onto the new disk. The new disk will then list the files contained on the protected disk (which do not exist on the new disk) and will not contain any information about the files originally contained on the new disk. Unless these files are pure ASCII text, you will not be able to recover the information contained in them. Gone is the original directory and the information contained in it that DOS keeps to find and assemble the pieces of the file on demand.

There are several other ways that a wrong response to Abort, Retry, or Ignore will produce scrambled contents on a disk. The safest method (if copying files is involved) is to select Abort, correct the problem and then repeat the copy commands once again. Retry is safe for simple operations that do not need to update the directory of the target disk (like DIR). ¶

If you get a disk error when writing to a floppy, don't switch disks and choose Retry. You could end up with a scrambled mess.

The SPAUG Resource Center

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Treasurer/ASSU Rep	Jared Nedzel	854-2732

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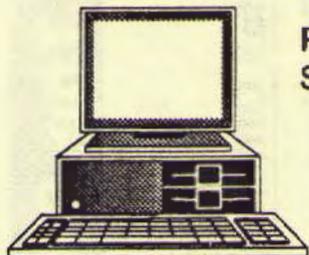
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