

Newsletter of Stanford Palo Alto Users Group for PC

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INTERNET SIG June 21, 7:30 PM at Syntex. see p. 2

GENERAL MEETING, VARIAN, BLDG 7 AUDITORIUM
Wednesday, June 28, 7:30 PM

ARES SOFTWARE: FONTMINDER
NO-HANDS: COMMON GROUND 2.0 SOFTWARE
PYXAR: TYPESTRY SOFTWARE

NON-MEMBERS WELCOME

President's Piece

Winners

The Muse of Good Fortune shown upon many happy members at the May General Meeting. Kendric Smith won Norton Act! Larry Mehl won Norton Utilities v.8, an AirNote T-shirt, and Aces. The Critical Mission, Top 100 exciting games. Wern Westman won the Music Workshop. Bill Goldmacker, Clark Moore, and Bob Mitchell all won AirNote T-shirts. Symantec gave User Group pens to everybody. A copy of Norton Utilities for Win95 was also given away. Logitech donated a FotoMan digital camera to SPAUG. A BIG THANK YOU to Seth Wu who helped with the prize administration.

HomePage

Kendric Smith, (415) 493-7210, proposed a SPAUG HomePage on the Internet. Donated server space from Media City (415) 321-6800 is the plan basis. A HomePage SIG is ramping up with Kendric as the Co-SysOp. Judging from the sign-up sheet, this is a very HOT SIG. Call Kendric to join this creative group. The SPAUG Officers donated the Walnut Creek Internet CD-ROM, containing 17,420 Internet documents, and NT WebSite Beta with Win95 WebServer to the SIG.

BBS Conference

A proposal for a SPAUG conference on the Dead Dog Party BBS (415) 968-7919 has surfaced. Noteworthy is the idea as DDP is a graphics based BBS. You need to download the Client software after the SysOp gives you an upgraded access. Pencil ✍ this electronic journey into your DayTimer. Larry Weinberg (415) 969-2292 is Opinion ✓ Keeper so call ☎ him with your feedback.

Video Engineers

Jim Dinkey and Seth Wu are working to bring Jim Powell's Disk 📀-of-the-Month to the Varian Big Screen. Shrouded in arcane lore, the Electrohome Overhead Projector's operation secrets have been unveiled. Open membership available. Engineer's Guild card not required, the group meets at 7 pm before the General Meetings.

Acrobat

The Adobe Acrobat v.2 reader is on the SPAUG BBS as ADOBE.ZIP in the Polo Directory.

Industry Videos

Lotus, Borland, and Claris have all sent SPAUG technology briefings on tape. I have given these to Mildred for inclusion in the Lending Library.

June Guests

Britannic Bold and FootLight MT Light come alive at the June General Meeting when **Ares Software** presents FontMinder software, **No-Hands** presents Common Ground 2.0 software, and **Pixar** presents Typestry software. This festival of fonts and font management strives to share the artistry of enhanced written communication.

See you on June 28th!.....*Brian*

INTERNET SIG

The first meeting of the SPAUG Internet SIG will be on Wednesday, June 21, at 7:30 pm. We will meet at the Syntex Conference Center, Room A2-1. Syntex (soon to be Roche Bioscience), is located at 3401 Hillview Avenue, Palo Alto. The meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month.

Hillview runs between Foothill and Arastradero. Look for the flags at the entrance on your left as you come to the top of the hill from Foothill, or the reverse if you are coming downhill from Arastradero.

The Conference Center is to the right of the big flagpole as you drive in. Visitor parking is on your right as well.

Actually, the SMUG (Stanford Palo Alto Macintosh User Group) Internet SIG (Clint Kraft, chairman) has invited us to join them at their regular meetings. They have been meeting now for about 1 year. It seems reasonable for PC and MAC people to meet jointly at an Internet SIG since most of the information about the Internet platform is independent.

This month, after a brief introduction to the Internet for the beginners, we will go around the room so that people can ask questions.

People share new URLs (addresses on the Internet) that they think will be of interest to the group. We talk about service providers, books, etc. Here is a really useful URL from last month's meeting:

<http://alpha.acast.nova.edu/reference.html>

Come and meet people in our informal round-table setting. I hope to see you there. *Kendric*

PRINT MASTER GOLD—CD-ROM BONUS PACK for WINDOWS
Software Review by Robert Mitchell, SPAUG member

MicroLogic Software, Emeryville, CA

Price: \$59.95 - Street price around \$40.00

Phone: 510-652-5464

Fax: 510-652-5040

System Requirements: 2MB, 4MB recommended.

3MB Hard Drive Space, 12MB recommended

Microsoft Windows 3.1 & mouse (recommended)

Sound Card recommended

Any Windows printer

I have been a Print Shop program user since the days of the old Apple II computer back in the early 80s. When I used the Print Shop program with the Apple II, I used to be able to get their add-on graphics packages with hundreds of useful graphics for a reasonable price. Later on with the IBM version of the program, the add-on packages became disappointingly skimpy for what they were charging for them. The quality of the graphics was poor compared to what I got for the Apple version. All of this changed when recently I tried out an evaluation copy of Print Master Gold CD-ROM. It includes over 1600 pieces of graphics, 120+ true type fonts in the package, and an extensive collection of ready-made designs. The graphics types include TIFF, BMP, CGM, WPG, PCX, GIF and WMF. The last important feature is the Audio Guide, which guides you through the program.

Print Master Gold has a simple main screen of 6 long, narrow buttons with a button bar of 9 small buttons near the top of the Windows screen plus standard Windows menus: File, View and Help. The other functions are Poster, Card, Banner, Calendar, Add-on-Fonts, Picture Catalog and Exit. The other screens within the program are just like the main page that comes up when the program starts. This program has many Desktop Publishing program features such as text and graphics resizing, layering, flipping, rotating and text color control. Other features include the ability to add your own graphics and fonts to an already extensive collection. The MicroLogic Designer Collection Manual shows you the extensive collection of graphics that come with the program. The main manual shows all the same graphics in packages, along with fonts that can be purchased separately.

But with the CD-ROM version of the program, all of these come with the program on the CD disk.

When designing cards, banners, posters and calendars, the user can use the large collection of ready-made designs, modify the ready-made designs or design your own from scratch. The possibilities are endless. While one works, the built-in audio guide gives you guidance as to what each feature is. If you feel you don't need the guide, just turn it off under the preferences menu under the file menu.

For all the features this program does come with, the program does have some weakness. It lacks some features like snap to grid rulers and layout guides which another program, **Announcements 3.0** has. One of the main reasons I like this program is the extensive collection of fonts and graphics that comes with the program, but **Announcements** comes with less than 300 graphics and no fonts—period.

The other big feature I liked about the program is the way it prints. Whether the user has a laser printer, ink jet or dot matrix, color or not, the results will be wondrous. There is a lot of control in how it is printed. The user can print their project(s) on one page or as big as a garage door, whichever they choose, and their job(s) will be printed with perfection. The other features the print screen has are coloring book mode which prints all the graphics except CGM, TIFF or PCX with an outline. This allows the user to color the pictures with crayon or coloring pencil himself after they are printed. The other feature is smoothing. This smoothens out low resolution bit-mapped graphics. The program renders each and every element of the project before printing it out. All the graphics will be smooth and jaggedless, as if they had been done on a Postscript printer. When I used Print Shop before, I could never get this much satisfaction from the printouts of the projects.

The last and nicest thing of all is that there is nothing else to buy if you buy the CD-ROM version. What's more, no extra add-on fonts or graphics. If one had purchased the floppy disk version of this program, you would have to purchase most of these graphics and fonts separately. This would have cost you hundreds of dollars. That is too much with today's limited budgets. This will save a lot of money.

HOW I BECAME A SOFTWARE REVIEWER

Ted Murdoch, SPAUG member

A few months after I joined SPAUG, an announcement was made at a meeting that anyone interested in reviewing software should provide name, address, and telephone number to a person who would be available during the break. The only requirements were a system with a CD drive, one of three word processors, and some interest in photography. I had a CD drive, one of the required word processors, and—if not much of an interest in photography—a very new and beautiful granddaughter. I talked with the representative at the meeting and left the required information.

Somehow I qualified, because a few weeks later I got a telephone call, and a sort of over-the-phone interview. I was invited to the company site for an evening to hear about the software, spend some time using it, and meet the developers. I was one of four from SPAUG who were part of that meeting. We heard a brief introductory lecture about the product. They wanted us to use the product with a minimum of assistance. They wanted to have a product that required a minimum of instruction. The word of the evening was "intuitive." After spending years writing technical manuals for military and commercial computer products, I have opinions about the good and bad aspects of manuals, but I have little trust in intuition.

intuition 2c the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought or inference

Webster's Tenth Collegiate Dictionary

The only way to become familiar with any type of computer software is to use it, but with software as with swimming, jumping in with little or no instruction can be a frustrating experience, resulting in much thrashing about. A minimum of instruction is necessary in both situations. The problem is to determine how much. Most people want a detailed reference for complex applications, as indicated by the shelves of books that keep selling. Initially, most people want to see some examples. I want a few pages of step-by-step instructions that get me into representative initial screen and out again. What I don't want is pages of text that have very little hard information buried in "friendly language" or very weak attempts at humor. Nor do I want a few pages of material filled mostly with assurances that the software is very easy to use.

Even though I was critical of intuition in the use of software, I was accepted, and a short time later, the company sent me a one-time-use camera complete with film, and instructed me to take some pictures and return the film to the company. I let the parents take the pictures of my granddaughter, and they left some for me. Soon after I returned the film, I was sent the beta release of the software, the processed film, a CD-ROM with pictures of my granddaughter on it, and a request to use the software, play with it, and report all problems and comments to the company.

The first thing to do was install the application. The instructions said to type `d:\setup.exe`. No intuition there. After I installed the software, I found the usual multicolored blurb that showed how easy it was to use the application. For me, the problem is that I can't remember all that material. Perhaps there's a trick I don't know yet, that would make it possible to switch instantly from application to online help. I'm not sure I would like that any better. I decided to experiment with the application, making mistakes of all kinds, until I finally got comfortable with it. Is that intuition? Eventually I wrote a few pages of step-by-step instructions that enabled me to get into the application and out again quickly. I sent them along with other material, but it was much too late for such material, and I doubt if they will be used. I have a bias against online help: others have a bias against written instructions. We are both wrong. I assume that over the years the proper balance will be found, and developers will provide a small pamphlet of written instructions with the software.

Once I was comfortable with using the application, I was ready to test it. As I explained in my report to the developers, for me testing meant making some deliberate errors to find out if the software generated an error message, or went off into Never-Never Land. It included such things as opening more windows than the system could handle. Sometimes, of course, the system surprised me when I wasn't deliberately making errors or perhaps not making errors at all. In such cases, I tried to remember what was happening at the time, and attempted to repeat the conditions. At least I recorded any error messages, and included that information in my report. At the end of the testing period, the company sent me a copy of the released software.

Murdoch—Continued from previous page...

Film processors can put your photographs on a CD. To make full use of the application, users probably would want a color scanner. A user can place a standard color photograph in a color scanner, and create an image on the disk. The image can be transferred to a floppy disk, or to a word processor. Of course, to print the photograph, you might want a color printer. With such applications markets are created. Even my granddaughter (now a few months short of her third birthday anniversary) wants to see herself on the computer.



STILL CAMERA FOR YOUR PC

Jack R. Cook

Reprinted from *p-bug*, Palm Beach User Group

Until now, the only options we had for getting graphics into our computer documents was to scan artwork, create it using a graphical program like PaintBrush or CorelDraw, or cut and paste on paper after we printed our textual documents.

Now you can carry an electric camera weighing less than one pound with you which can take up to 32 colored pictures.

Using software which comes with the camera, you can download the pictures to your computer in any format you like (PCS, TIFF, KPEG and BMP) and incorporate them into a letter, greeting card, database file of products or personnel, or dress up newsletters and books.

A connecting cable is included with the camera to connect the computer's serial port to the camera for downloading. Once downloaded, the camera is ready to shoot 32 more pictures. As a matter of fact, the manufacturer claims that you can take 120 pictures using the three fully charged AA batteries which power the camera.

Like all new technology, the cost to stay on the cutting edge is steep. You can have one of these gems right now if you are willing to part with about \$600 to \$800. Just in case you wondered, this is one review product that you do not get to keep. Darn it!

DOWN WITH WINDOWS 95 & OS/2 WARP!

Jack R. Cook

Reprinted from *p-bug*, Palm Beach Users Group

For readers who have an XT, AT, 386 or 486 and don't have any interest in the "latest and greatest" operating systems which consume so much hard drive space and want oodles of RAM to work, this is for you.

PC DOS 7 (by IBM) is brand new and is introduced at a point in time when I did not think that there would be any more new DOS versions. After all, Windows 95, OS/2 and Windows NT are all we read and hear about these days. So, what does DOS 7 offer?

For one thing, just about all of the executable and utility files, such as FORMAT, CHKDSK, DEBUG, DISKCOMP, FDISK, MODE, HIMEM, DOSKEY, FIND, PRINT and many others have smaller byte counts requiring less disk and memory space to operate.

Some of the more interesting things about this latest DOS version is that it comes with:

Online built in hypertext help system.

Event scheduler to make backups or run any program of your choice at a pre-determined time and date. You can schedule daily, weekly, monthly, workdays or one time events.

Stacker compression to more than double hard drive space.

Central Point's PC Tools backup program (rather than DOS BACKUP).

RamBoost utility that continuously monitors your computer software (additions and deletions) and makes changes automatically to maximize available RAM to run (large) programs.

Multi-configuration boot option.

All this and more at an upgrade (from any DOS) price of less than \$50.



MICROSOFT NATURAL KEYBOARD

Jim Bowers

Reprinted from *Redwood Chips*, PC Users' Group of the Redwoods, May 1995

As my friend said, "What's natural about a keyboard anyway? And the one you've got there looks like it's been left out in the sun." The Microsoft Natural Keyboard (MSNK) is a radical departure from keyboards of the past, and breaks all tradition from the keypunch and dumb terminals of yesteryear. MSNK has a split, sloped-key arrangement and soft tactile key switches. It has a couple extra keys for direct access to Windows' functions, and it ships complete with a special 3.5" high-density diskette with, yes, you guessed it—Windows-based drivers and utilities. So...we're still waiting for Windows 95 and Microsoft keeps getting us ready.

It Looks Different

If you've been thinking this keyboard is for you, you better ask yourself if you can aesthetically stand the idea of something that is not linear or symmetric on your personal computer. It's not level on all sides, it has a big curve across the bottom of it. It arches up from underneath. It is several shades lighter than the classic "computer putty" color. And, when I put my bright blue wrist rest under it, VIOLA, lots of ugly! So, the answer here is, don't look at it. Let your wrists see if they like it.

If you are a "hunt and peck" typist, I don't think this keyboard will help you at all. It is much harder to see the keys at an angle. It is best viewed when you are directly over it. Visually easy to use? Yeah, sure, if you're a bird.

A Different Tilt

The "classic" keyboards usually have two small legs that flip down on the back of the board to tilt the board toward you. The MSNK has a Wrist Leveler. The Wrist Leveler is a long piece of plastic in the front of the keyboard. When you flip it down, the keyboard is tilting away from you. It's another angle that keeps your wrists straight while you work—a very excellent idea.

It weighs much less than I thought it would. It counts on four little white sticky feet on the corners to keep it from moving. When those little feet get dusty, it slips. When you put down the wrist leveler, you give up two of those sticky little corners—no sticky feet on the Wrist Leveler. Because I am a big guy with big hands, the

keyboard kept moving. Then, I wedged it between the computer and my old wrist rest. Now it doesn't move.

I thought the Palm Rest should have replaced my wrist rest, but not so. The Palm Rest is a curved hard piece of plastic and doesn't help soften the edge of the desk. When I put the Wrist Leveler down I put my wrist rest under it and flushed it to the edge of the desk. Then, I took it out again. I don't know. Why do you think they made that big curve anyway? Packaging? Marketing?

A Little Hard to Get Used To

Some of my problems come from the fact that I have been typing on very "unnatural" keyboards for my whole life. Since high school's touch-typing class I have always had a hard time typing numbers. They are at the top of the keyboard and hard to reach. When the Function keys went on top of the number keys, that was impossible. So, I always look down. On the MSNK the Function keys are in a flying "V" above the numbers so you can touch type them, I guess. I like the Function keys better in three groups of four keys, like the Enhanced 101 keyboard. It was visually very easy. While typing numbers is easier on the MSNK, using Function keys is more difficult.

Keyboard Bumps

You now those little bumps on the "F" and "J" keys. They are there so you can find Home. Not all keyboards have them. On the MSNK they are 3/8 of an inch wide and at the bottom of easy associated key. Why so big? Because losing the Home row is really easy to do. When you look straight down, all you see are the repositioned keyboard indicator lights. Finding the Home row is not an immediate visual event.

Keyboard Sounds

With the keyboard driver you can add sounds to your key strokes. Both electric and manual typewriter sounds are produced with a carriage return slam when you hit the Enter key. There's also the "drip," "scissors," and "maracas" sounds, all too cute.

There's a drawback. It plays the sound completely before the keystroke is displayed. This

usually leaves a bunch of strokes in the keyboard buffer which appear all at once when the sounds have stopped playing. I'd rather see the letters as I type them.

The Clones

For years we have had IBM clones. Now we have Microsoft clones. There are clone Natural Keyboards. I don't know if they have the Wrist Leveler or Palm Rest, but what they sure don't have is the *IntelliType* software. The MS Keyboard driver and a new *Task Manager* give the MSNK some extra quality.

Windows Software

MSNK comes with a new version of *Task Manager*. This is a great enhancement to Windows. I always had a hard time keying <Ctrl> <Esc> to get to the *Task Manager* anyway. Now, the new version *Task Manager* pops up when you press either one of the new "windows" keys—they even have the Windows' logo on them. From the new *Task Manager* you can arrange all the open windows vertically, horizontally, cascaded, or just as arranged icons.

I didn't think arranging the open windows helped much. When you have six or seven windows open, it changes all open windows to itty-bitty windows so they fit on one screen. Then you have to go back and put them back manually to some size you can work with. I wonder if this works with other desktop shells?

On the keyboard driver display you can configure Function key 2 through 10 to launch applications like *Dashboard* or *Norton DeskTop* (it's about time), but they didn't put F1 in the visual display. The real F1 key has the work "Help" on it. Maybe MS never wants you to assign anything but the Help function to the F1 key, but without the F1 in the F-key lineup, you lose the visual element. What happened to WYSIWYG? The *IntelliType Manager* lets you control keyboard specifics: repeat rate and delay rate. It allows you to set the key locks at startup. It lets you control your mouse. It lets you move the Windows' pointer with the cursor keys. There is also a DOS version of *IntelliType Manager*.

The Mystery Key

This is the second new key Microsoft thought Windows' applications needed. It is only on the

right side of the keyboard. There are three big keys on the left side: <Ctrl>, <Windows>, and <Alt>. On the right side there are <Alt>, <Windows>, <Mystery Key>, and <Ctrl>. So what does it do? The icon on the key looks like a Copy operation. I really don't know. The Read Me First flyer in the box said it was the Applications key and "will provide shortcuts in future applications." I never found a description in the documentation, so it must be part of Windows9x.

Special Connections

There's a special feature in the keyboard driver for Windows NT users. Push both flying Windows keys simultaneously and you can logon or logoff of Windows NT. Novell, eat your heart out! But, hands up now, how many people out there are running Windows NT on their LAN at home?

Give Up Your Keyboard Templates

Since the PC business started out, there have always been keyboard templates. Now, with the new keyboard, there is no place to put them. The back of the keyboard is curved, so it doesn't fit flush up against anything. So, there's no place for a straight-edged 10" keyboard template. But, it does provide another opportunity for a niche marketer to come up with something.

Documentation

There's really not enough. You'll find: a 22-page booklet that is over half full of ergonomic tips and office exercises, a "Read Me First" flyer, the READ.ME file, and the Windows Help. It proves again, paper is more expensive than a floppy disk and has nothing to do with content.

The Bottom Line

MSNK is definitely a better way to type. Its design gives you more options. The software gives you features undreamed of in lower-priced keyboards. If you are having problems with computer-related aches and pains, this probably won't cure them, but it's a step in the right direction. The MSNK gives you a good feel, once you get used to it, and some special Windows' gadgets to help you along.

&

WEB PAGES AND YOU, ON THE INTERNET

Jim Espinoza

Reprinted from *Diablo Blue*, May 1995, Diablo Valley PC User's Group

If you have access to the Internet, you have no doubt found yourself a seemingly endless (if not sometimes confusing) source of information. If you have discovered the World Wide Web, or "The Web" as it is often called, you have found the excitement of the Internet. With a Web Browser, you can see graphics and pictures, hear sounds, but most importantly, you can use "hypertext links" to move from one site to the next.

What is this "hypertext link" thing? You probably have already used it whether you know it or not. This newsletter is for a user's group for IBM compatibles and Windows is the most popular operating shell. In all probability then, you have puled down a Help menu at least once (or a hundred or a thousand times). In your Help screen, you may find certain key words or phrases are highlighted and underlined. When you click on that word or phrase, you are presented with a new Help screen accordingly. If you have ever done this, then you have used a hypertext link to move from one "page" to the next.

Back on the Internet, you go to somebody's or some company's screen (Web page). When viewing that page, the person who set it up may refer you to other pages. You usually get more than just the electronic "address," you are provided with the ability to go to that address with the click of a mouse. The page owner might take you to deeper level of detail, to a higher summary or control level, off to another source of information, or just to another site the owner found to be of interest. The last category is very popular for personal home pages. (A home page is like a Welcome Screen. It acts as a doorway.) People finding their favorite sites often use their home page as a method of letting others know of their "gems" and provide linking to those sites. These pages can also contain some information about the owner, their interest and hobbies, sometimes even pictures of themselves, family and friends.

The days of difficult page building are gone. You don't have to know how to edit on a UNIX machine and you don't have to be a programmer to create one. The "language" used is called HTML. Hyper Text Markup Language. It can be written in any editor that supports flat text (ASCII) file formats. A bigger challenge is deciding what to put on your page or finding a provider that allows you to post your page.

There are several sources of information for HTML and Web browsing on the Internet itself. I obtained access to the Internet just this past January. I started researching how to build a page in late February. By March I had put up my first page. It wasn't fancy but I did it. If you point your Web browser to my home page (<http://www.hooked.net/user/jespi>) you can see what it looks like now. From my home page, I also provide a link to my original page. You'll see, it wasn't fancy at all!

Instead of being an observer of the Internet, become an active participant. Instead of just knowing the Internet, let the Internet know you. If I, a simple guy, can do it, so can you. Create a Web page and put yourself out there!

(Note: I have gathered up my notes, EMail and files from my research on building home pages. I am building these into a series of web pages to help other. From my home page, you can click on over to what I refer to as the *Simple Guy's Guide*. I figured (what the heck," I did this research already, why not share it with others?)



SPANISH SCHOLAR—A Software Review

Dewey Powell

Reprinted from *Diablo Blue*, Diablo Valley PC User's Group, June 1995

I like this program. **Yo gusto de este programa.** The preceding bold face sentence is *Spanish Scholar's* translation of the first sentence in this paragraph. I typed this sentence in AmiPro and copied it to the clipboard. Then I pasted it into the *Spanish Scholar's* translator and selected Translate. Wow! I am writing in Spanish, I think. I looked up each Spanish word in the Word Entry Box and there was an appropriate English word for each. These features work with any Windows word processor or spreadsheet. The features work both ways for both languages. More on this later.

Continued on the next page...

Powell *Continued from preceding page...*

Spanish Scholar's opening screen is also neat. Its screen is about 3½" by 4½" and all but the translator and an editor are controlled within this screen. This small screen allows you to view your word processor document while working in the Spanish Scholar screen. Included are the usual good features of Windows and the normal Windows characteristics.

The Menu Bar contains the usual File, Edit, and Help plus *Words*. Words contains the menu items that are also available by mouse clicking in the rest of the screen. One click and you can select any of the following: change language, search (different levels of searching are available), create translation file, print, thesaurus (display words in both languages), dictionary scrolling (words only, no definitions), select word form (verb, adjective, etc.), verb conjugator, Spanish accent insertion, vocabulary game, and grammar reference. The preceding sentence is tedious, but to describe each item in detail would fill up one small book. The remainder of the screen is used to enter a word and display a list of the other language synonyms listed in order of synonymy. Click the mirror thesaurus button and you get a list of synonyms and related words in both languages. Words are listed in order of the most often used.

Road Scholar's largest client is Volkswagen of Mexico, and this program was created to help other businesses to translate documents from English to Spanish and visa versa. Here is how you would translate an English document from AmiPro or any Windows word processor to Spanish. Select all or part of the text. Copy the text to the clipboard. Task switch to *Spanish Scholar*. Select translate. In the translate screen select Edit/Paste. You then chose the option button and set your choices, such as masculine, whole document, phrase by phrase, etc. Select translate. The translated document is now displayed in the lower half of the screen. Select the text and copy it to the Windows clipboard. Tasks switch to AmiPro and paste from the clipboard to a new AmiPro document and format the document as you desire. Now, the real test. I translated this document into Spanish and then reversed the procedure and translated it back into English. Of course it was not perfect for this is a very complex process, you will need some qualifications in both languages to end up with a good copy after this double translation. I estimate that about ten percent of the final English version would have to be edited. For example: After the double translation the word *screen* became *sieve*. Maybe the word should be window instead of screen—but I doubt it. The double translation

shows you where there may be problems. It is now time to use the correct Spanish dictionary and go to work. Full use of the options in the translating process would have helped to get a better translation.

In the translation process there are a number of features that you can use to control the style and the selection of words. In the phrase method of translation you are automatically offered a number of different forms of the phrase. Knowledgeable selections from these options would improve the translation.

Spanish Scholar recognizes 1.25 million terms, 12,800 full conjugated Spanish verbs, 17 Spanish verb forms, 13,600 fully conjugated English verbs, and 17 English conjugated verb forms.

The Manual includes three items that are not yet included in this version of the software. These items should appear in a future version. Some macros are included that will allow you to install *Spanish Scholar* in your word processor if the macro is written for that version of your word processor.

As I said at the beginning of this review, I like the program. It accomplishes so much in a fast, simple manner. It is fine for document translation and would be a convenience for a student of Spanish. If you add sound for pronunciation, video to convey meaning, a full dictionary for details, and graphics where useful, you would have all you need to learn some Spanish. Dream on, it is coming.



SPANISH SCHOLAR v2.0

Road Scholar Software

2603 Augusta, Suite 1000

Houston, TX 77057

Sales: 1-800-243-7623

Tech Support: 1-713-266-7623 (Ext: 711)

Fax: 1-713-266-4525

The suggested list price is \$99.95

Requirements: 386SX, 4MB RAM, DOS 3.1,

Windows 3.1, Hard Drive (about 6.2 MB),

VGA, and 3.5" 1.44MB Floppy Drive



WORDPERFECT 6.1 FOR WINDOWS - THE LATEST UPGRADE

Lance Whitey

Westchester PC News, April 1995

I admit it. I thought the folks at WordPerfect would take a break after releasing WordPerfect 6.0a, last year's impressive upgrade of their Windows word processor. I assumed 6.0a would be the last WordPerfect version for Windows 3.1. I was wrong. WordPerfect has taken advantage of the tardiness of Windows95 to unveil their latest upgrade—WordPerfect 6.1.

At first glance, WPWin 6.1 seemed to fit the classic definition of a minor upgrade. It looked, felt, and behaved just like its predecessor—6.0a. (A profile of WPWin 6.0a appeared in the August 1994 issue of *Westchester PC News*.) The more I delved into 6.1, however, the more innovations I discovered. Although no one dramatic change stands out, the program boasts a variety of modest but useful enhancements.

Many changes in WordPerfect 6.1 are designed to play catch up with its main rival Microsoft Word for Windows. Like WinWord, WordPerfect now has a multi-level Undo feature, a Table Auto Format option, even a frame-drawing tool for inserting graphics. In some of these new features, WPWin doesn't just meet Word, it beats Word.

A New Look

The WordPerfect 6.1 screen looks cleaner than the one in 6.0a. The Power Bar has been shrunk so it uses less space. As with previous versions, you can alter and edit the Power Bar as well as the Toolbar at the top and the Status Bar at the bottom. I've never been a big toolbar fan because I always thought they took up too much valuable space. But WPWin's toolbars blend well into the screen and are so unobtrusive you'll want to keep them all on.

To Do or Not to Undo

Both Microsoft Word and WordPerfect have always offered you the ability to "undo" your last action. Word's Undo feature has the upper edge because it supports multiple levels, while WPWin had just one level of Undo. No more. WPWin 6.1 boasts a multi-level Undo mode that can go all the way up to 300 levels. That's probably overkill, so the program lets you set the Undo level anywhere from 1 to 300. Almost anything you do in a WordPerfect document at almost any time can be undone. An Undo history keeps track of all your actions and changes. You can even save your undo changes with your document, so a file your last worked on a year ago will still have an Undo

history. There's a Redo option if you change your mind and want to undo your last undo.

Advice from the Experts

WordPerfect's Table Editor has always been top-notch. Now it's even better. Creating and designing tables is easier than ever thanks to 6.1's new Table Expert. Often the most time-consuming part of creating a table is the formatting—fiddling with lines and shading and alignment and a dozen other attributes WPWin's Table Expert offers 40 pre-designed styles that you can apply to a table automatically. Maybe you want your header row to have double lines and center alignment but the rest of your table to have single lines and left alignment. No problem. Just choose that style from the Table Expert. Microsoft Word has a similar option called Table Auto Format. WordPerfect does it better. WPWin lets you create and edit your own styles. Even with a predefined style, you can still easily format individual cells, rows, and columns, something difficult to do in Word.

WPWin includes another "expert" called Make it Fit. Say you type your resume and it stretches beyond one page with just a few lines or a paragraph on page two. You really want to fit it all on page one. The make it Fit Expert will change margins, fonts, or other attributes you select to make the document fit on a single page.

Makes Perfect Sense to Me

WordPerfect's Grammatik grammar checker is a useful tool. But in the past it was limited by its inability to understand words in the context of a sentence. Grammatik has been redesigned for 6.1, and it's a heck of a lot smarter. I'd gotten out of the habit of running the grammar checker because I found its suggestions off base much of the time. Thanks to a new technology known as PerfectSense, Grammatik's advice is now more in-depth and accurate. It will explain in greater detail the construction of your sentences and the rationale behind its advice. The PerfectSense technology extends to the Search and Replace tool. Now you can type in a word such as "write" and WordPerfect will find all forms of the word, including "wrote," "writing," and "written." This also works when replacing words. Say you want to replace all forms of the word "create" with the word "imagine." WPWin will also replace "created" with "imagined" and "creating" with "imagining." Of course, like most features in 6.1, you can turn this off when you don't want it.

Graphically Speaking

WordPerfect has never been a slouch in the graphic department. Its ability to work with graphics is one of its strong points, with one exception. WPWin has never offered you a way to preset the size or position of a graphic before you inserted it. That's been corrected. In WPWin 6.1 you can "draw" a frame for a graphic just as you can in Microsoft Word. You simply create a frame in the size and area you want, then insert your graphic. No more fiddling with it after the fact. The graphics editor WPDRAW also shows minor improvement. You can now edit a graphic without leaving your document. WPDRAW is more intuitive, but it also seems slower than in 6.0a.

Help Me if You Can

WordPerfect has always provided good built-in help. That's one of many features that continues to improve with age. WPWin 6.1 has several new Coaches—quick tutorials that take you on interactive rides through prominent commands. I also like the Upgrade Expert which lists features from Microsoft Word, Ami Pro, and other word processors and explains how they work in WordPerfect.

Another way WordPerfect helps you is through built-in templates. These predefined styles let you create anything from an invoice to a newsletter. The templates in 6.0a were disorganized and confusing. You had no way of telling what each template did before selecting it. Templates in 6.1 are now organized by subject matter, so they're simpler to use. Under the heading "Business," you'll find templates for business cards, invoices, and purchase orders. Under "calendar" are templates for creating monthly calendars. And under "Publish" are templates for creating greeting cards, brochures, and newsletters. On the minus side, the templates still aren't easy to create or edit, an area in which Microsoft Word surpasses WordPerfect.

More Tidbits

The new WordPerfect offers other unique enhancements. Cutting and pasting sentences is sometimes annoying because you often have to clean up afterwards, adding or deleting spaces. Version 6.1 has "smart" cut and paste which automatically adds or deletes spaces between sentences. WordPerfect's QuickFormat feature, which lets you copy the formatting of one piece of text to another, is also smarter. There's now an Auto Update option for QuickFormat which can automatically change all

quick-formatted text in one shot. WPWin 6.1 supports OLE (Object Linking and Embedding) version 2.0. You can now drag and drop embedded objects to and from a WordPerfect document. You can also use in-place editing to update objects. Click on a chart you imported from Excel to WordPerfect, and WordPerfect's toolbars and menus are replaced by those from Excel.

A Suite Package

WordPerfect 6.1 is available separately, or as part of a new suite called PerfectOffice. Other applications in this package include a spreadsheet—Quattro Pro 6.0, a graphics program—Presentations 3.0, an information manager—InfoCentral, a portable document viewer—Envoy, and an e-mail manager—GroupWise. All PerfectOffice applications have the same look and feel and use common resources. So they're ideal for sharing data.

Summing Up

WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows sells for \$99 if you upgrade from a previous version and \$129 if you switch from a competing product. Is WPWin 6.1 worth the price? If you're using WPWin 6.0a, there's no one compelling reason to jump up, though you won't be disappointed if you do. If you're working with an earlier version of WordPerfect or a competing product, moving to WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows is definitely worth the trip.

System Requirements

PC using 386 25 Mhz or above micro-processor. Windows 3.1 or higher. 6 MB RAM required, 8 MB recommended. 28 MB hard disk space for standard installation (10 MB for minimum).

Westchester PC News Editor's Note: I've been using QPWin 6.1 for over a month on a 486/66 system with 8 MB RAM. I also use Norton Desktop for Windows as my shell. In my opinion, 8 MB RAM is the minimum you would want to have to run this program. Running only WPWin 6.1 it uses the hard disk for lots of file swapping, which slows you down. As an experiment, I replaced NDTW with Program Manager and had a noticeable increase in speed (less use of the hard disk) but not sufficient to warrant changing back to Program Manager as my shell. I think 16 MB is probably what you really need to reduce all the file swapping necessary now and really get up to speed. It is interesting to note that many new systems are being built with 16 MB RAM standard.

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH DISKS PURCHASED FROM THE WPCUG LIBRARY

Nancy Young
Westchester PC News

(Editor's note: This article is reprinted to help our members with the DOM (Disk of the Month). As one inexperienced in making use of our DOM, unzipping files, etc., I found it very useful.)

After you buy a disk from the WPCUG library, you need to take a few steps to install the software and make it usable. This is a tutorial to help make the installation process a little easier.

To make this tutorial as understandable as possible, we are using the following conventions: anything you type on your keyboard is in bold type. Any buttons you press are in capital letters. Everything that you type or enter is written here in courier bold. Any messages the computer gives you is written here in courier normal.

Let's get started!

Make a directory on your hard disk for each program:

md xxxx and press **ENTER**

(xxxx) is the name you want for your subdirectory. It can be up to 8 characters in length.

Change to the new directory:

cd\xxxx and press **ENTER**

Copy files from floppy into the new directory:

xcopy a: c: (or **xcopy b: c:**) and press **ENTER**

Now, find out what files are in the new directory:

dir/p and press **ENTER**

If you see:

<any filename>.zip

this means the file is compressed and must be decompressed before proceeding.

Using the DOS 28* disk from WPCUG library, make a directory, type:

md PKZ and press **ENTER**

Then change to the PKZ directory:

Type **cd\pkz** and press **ENTER**

With the Dos28 disk in your a: drive (or b: drive), type:

xcopy a: (or b:)\pkz204g.exe c: and press **ENTER**

Then type:

pkz204g and press **ENTER**

This will decompress the pkzip decompression software so you can use it.

Now, change to first directory made, type:

cd\xxxx and press **ENTER**

Decompress the program by typing:

c:\pkz\pkunzip xxxx (the file name) and press **ENTER**

You're now ready to use the software you bought. To find out what command to use to start the new program, type

dir/p and press **ENTER**

if you see

xxxx.doc, then type:

type xxxx.doc | more and press **ENTER**

If you see

READ.ME, THEN TYPE:

type read.me | more and press **ENTER**

OR

you can print the file by typing:

type <filename.doc> prn and press **ENTER**

Either method will enable you to read any important information before you start the program. Then, if you see:

xxxx.exe, then type:

xxxx and press **ENTER**

Similarly, if you see:

xxxx.com, then type:

xxxx and press **ENTER**

Your program should now start.

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DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Hank Volpe

Reprinted from *BIBMUG*, Buffalo IBM-PC User Group

"20 Minutes into the Future"

Since the last time I've had the opportunity to visit with you in print, there has been an explosion of Digital Communications technology. The last six to eight months have been exceptionally prolific for creators and marketers alike. Your choices for information sources are expanding exponentially. Major on-line services like CompuServe, Prodigy, and America Online are being challenged by Internet, PCS communications equipment, and two "old" information providers: Radio and Television. These new systems are absolutely incredible to behold. Imagine downloading 2.8 megs of files in 10 seconds using your television set! How about getting news, including moving pictures and sound, via a simple hookup to your cable TV? When you're done "interacting" with your computer, you don't turn it off. Instead, it now runs and manages your house while you're away. All of these technologies are not years away, but rather (as Max Headroom says), "20 minutes into the future."

Before we get started, I need to do a bit of a disclaimer. My job gives me some unique opportunities to view technology that is forming. I also participate in several engineering committees that are testing and evaluating these future technologies. One of these committees is the National Association of Broadcaster's Data Broadcast Subcommittee. This group is investigating methods of mass data delivery using over the air radio and television broadcasts. I also have the opportunity from time to time to be an "expert viewer" at the Advanced Television Test Center (ATTC). This group is charged with testing the viability of High Definition Television and Data Broadcasting. Because of these relationships, I will need to refrain from mentioning the systems we'll discuss in this article by vendor name. I don't want it to appear that by mentioning or omitting a product that I favor one approach over another. Besides, who knows how many times the working title of a product will change before it hits the market?

Transfer Data at Blazing Speed

Let's start in an area that you're all familiar with. Transferring files over modems is a pretty old data distribution method. As a user, you sign onto a bulletin board, browse a series of files, and download these files to your computer using a file transfer protocol. These protocols (Xmodem, Ymodem, Zmodem and their various "flavors")

have been around for more than 15 years. During that time, the emphasis has been on increasing the speed of these downloads.

At 300 bps, a 64k file takes approximately 3.5 minutes. At 14400 bps (with a modest amount of data compression) that same file takes 40 seconds. With larger files, the time difference is even more dramatic. A 1 meg file at 300 bps takes 57 minutes to transfer. At 14400 bps, this transfer takes place in a little over 10 minutes. It's no wonder that serious modem users want faster and faster modems.

No matter how fast modems become, the physical limit of the current telephone system has been reached with current technology. The new 28.8 kbps modems usually work at a top speed of about 21k bps. It's apparent that higher speeds can only be reached using new telephone technology. ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) is one new technology with lots of promise. ISDN is a telephone service that uses a digital telephone signal. It transports digital signals from one place to the other. These digital signals can be voice, picture, or voice/modem. BRI-ISDN (Basic Rate Interface) is comprised of two telephone circuits. Each circuit has its own phone number. These circuits are called "B" channels (Bearer) and can support 64k bps data on each channel. Channels can be "bonded" to create a 128k bps data highway. At this speed, a 1 meg file is transferred in 8 seconds! Using this technology, you could converse with a person while they download a data file or a fax. Telecommuting (the ability to work out of the home) becomes a practical alternative to business, and Internet access becomes fast and affordable to everyone with a phone.

ISDN is priced (in most areas) on-par with standard 1-MB (measured business) service. In my area, ISDN's monthly charge is \$36 per month plus 5 cents a minute usage fee. For home users of ISDN, before you pay the 5 cent usage fee, add up how much money you'll save on long distance charges if you could connect ISDN to an information provider and download megs of files in minutes instead of hours per month. ISDN is a great solution for point-to-point data transfers. However, ISDN only solves part of the physical limit placed on data distribution. Since it works like a telephone, only one user can access data at one time. The provider of the data service needs to invest and maintain a vast modem/computer network consisting of hundreds or thousands of modems. The next limit to remove is the cost of expensive networks, and the way to do that is with conventional TV and cable TV.

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network consisting of hundreds or thousands of modems. The next limit to remove is the cost of expensive networks, and the way to do that is with conventional TV and cable TV.

Couch Potatoes Move Over

By definition, "Broadcasting" is the method of carrying information to a large group of people. Broadcast Television reaches hundreds of thousands of people in each city. Cable TV, although reaching only 60% of the same people, still connects to a significant amount of viewers and offers many more channels than can be broadcast in an area due to FCC and technical restrictions. Many vendors are currently developing methods of broadcasting data into your home using television. These solutions have to meet strict FCC rules regarding interference to other stations, interference to the picture and sound portions of the TV signals and yet remain high-speed enough to be a practical alternative to standard wired services.

These systems require a special "cable-modem" or data board which plugs into your PC. One system that I recently saw was very impressive. It requires a special adapter board that takes up one expansion slot in your computer. You plug your television antenna or cable antenna into the back of this board. The software that you load presents you with a simple graphical interface. When the data board detects a TV signal with a special data signal, it begins receiving information. You can set the software up to grab everything that it sees or to inform you of what's available. In the "what's available" mode, little windows open with a "tease," telling you about what's coming on the system. In the demo, I saw the TV schedules for the evening, background information on several news stories, a weather forecast (complete with maps and weather data), and several shareware programs all ready to download. Some commercials were transmitted with "coupons" that you could download and print out. One car commercial transmitted an interactive list of car dealers, locations, estimated prices, and features for the car of your choice.

The magic behind the picture is not very magical. This data was transmitted in something television engineers call the "vertical interval." This is the space between the bottom and the top of your television picture. Right now, broadcasters use this data to transmit closed-captioning and test

signals. If you're curious, roll down the TV picture using the vertical hold knob on your TV. Soon you will see some color lines placed inside a horizontal black bar. This area is normally hidden at the top of the picture. Using 4-5 of these lines, it is possible to transmit up to 2.8 megabits per second. Another method of transmitting data involves placing something called a subcarrier above the color frequencies and below those used by audio. This method also allows for high speed data transfer of a comparable nature. Vertical intervals and subcarriers have been around for a long time. Subcarriers have been used to deliver the ever-popular "elevator music" you hear in restaurants and (of course) in elevators. Just recently has there been any interest in data broadcasting.

Data broadcasting over the air makes a lot of sense. Imagine for a moment that there is an update of your favorite software you wish to order. You see in your interactive screen that this update will be available to download shortly. You click a mouse to indicate you want it. Now the next time the data is sent, your computer will snatch it out of the air and place it on your hard drive.

Next to the filename there is a button marked "REGISTER." You click it, and using your modem, it calls an 800 number where the software is charged to the credit card of your choice. In a matter of minutes, you've gotten your update and you are ready to use it. Not only does this save time, but money as well. The software manufacturer does not need to package, print, invoice or ship your product. Savings of \$20-\$60 per software package will be commonplace. Along the same lines, let's say you've never used the product but you are interested in trying it out. You could tell your computer to grab both the registered version and the shareware (or demo) version of the program. After it's completed, you run the demo and if you like it, just click the register button and you'll have the program. As they say on TV, "It's that simple!"

As good as all this is, another vendor has added yet another level to this distribution channel. Their technology makes it possible to take a quarter, a half, or all of the TV screen and use it to transmit data at very high speeds. 20 megs of data could be transmitted in several seconds and received by your system! This is perfect for shop-at-home computer services. In fact, after you receive the download, a demo program automatically runs and while the person is explaining on the TV, the demo is executing under control of the TV demonstrator. Like I said earlier, it's incredible to behold!

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Dialtone Delights

The over-the-air transmission of data is incredibly fast, but its interactivity is limited. Broadcasting is not a two-way path. The signal needs to be "completed" using a telephone (even if

it's for a short period of time, like to register software). Truly Interactive TV (ITV) required a return to the wired approach. Cable TV and the Phone Companies through something called "Video Dialtone" will be the providers of this service. Using a TV set, a set-top computer box, and a mouse, you will be able to receive movies on demand, shop for services, get community information, pay your bills and handle you banking. Although lower in speed than the TV systems above, ITV makes more personal one-on-one transactions available at higher speeds and lower costs than traditional modem networks.

ITV is actually a big video/audio database. A media server resides at the cable TV head end or at the phone company central office. Your set-top computer, when activated, boots up and downloads a video run time library from this media server. The run time library from this media server. The run time library contains all the necessary authoring and viewing tools that you will need for your interactive session. Using a mouse or a touch screen, you guide your way to services, movies, and other dialtone delights. Unlike the broadcast signal, you can get whatever you like at any time. You don't need to wait around for the next scheduled transmission. This individuality does come with a price, usually measured in "mouse-clicks." Each click will cost you a fraction of a penny. As the clicks add up, they are charged to your phone or cable bill. In the case of movies or other premium services, these clicks are added on top of the fee to access the premium tier. For those who need information, need it now, and are willing to pay a modest fee, ITV offers unlimited benefits.

Data Data Everywhere

You might ask yourself why all of this is data exchanging system is necessary, and quite frankly I wonder why too. I think it's best to say that none of this is necessary. In fact, you need to ask just how much information a person can possibly assimilate and stay sane. Having looked at this from both sides for quite a while, I'm beginning to feel that this information service capability is a lot like your microwave oven. You can get along just fine without one, but once you've started using it, you can't imagine being without it. The Internet is an

incredible resource of information on nearly every topic imaginable; however this superhighway's on-ramp is a one-lane dirt road. SLIP connections, TCP/IP, and other wired network management systems get bogged down by the sheer volume of traffic.

In its simplest forms, requesting information is a very low speed activity. You type or click a mouse. The receiving of data requires high-speed capacity in the delivery system. This view of data exchange is sometimes called Asymmetrical because of these high speed/low speed requirements. Proponents of new systems each offer unique solutions to both sides of the data transfer. ISDN is relatively economical and easy to implement. Broadcast data offers a high speed reception path that sends information repeatedly over the air. The user can select or ignore what's being sent at any one time. Video Dialtone ITV provides instant data gratification, but at a price. Each of these will make the distribution of data faster and cheaper. Each of these systems will be deployed shortly...just 20 mintes into the future.

If you have a question regarding Digital Communications, just drop me a line. You can reach me via Internet at either: hank.volpe@ghawk.com or modem.doctor@ghauk.com. You can also reach me on my BBS, the Modem Doctor BBS at 410-256-3631. Finally, there's the US Postal service, and our address is PO Box 43214, Baltimore MD. 21236.

It's Not Easy Being Bill

Reprinted from TidBITS#280/05-Jun-95

God calls Boris Yeltsin, Bill Clinton and Bill Gates into his office and says, "The world will end in 30 days. Go back and tell your people." So, Boris Yeltsin goes to the Russian people and says, "I have bad news and I have worse news. The bad news is that we were wrong: there is a God. The worse news is that the world will end in 30 days."

Bill Clinton goes on TV and tells the American people, "I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is that the basic family values upon which we have based our lives on are right - there is a God. The bad news is that the world will end in 30 days."

Bill Gates goes to his executive committee and says, "I have great news and I have fabulous news. The great news is that God thinks I am important. The fabulous news is that we don't have to ship Windows 95!"

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Jim Powell Special

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8-N-1

GENERAL MEETINGS

Last Wednesday of the month
 Varian Associates, Bldg. 7 Auditorium
 3075 Hansen Way, Palo Alto
 7:30 PM

What User Groups Are All About

Esther Schindler, Phoenix PC Users Group
Reprinted from Westchester PC News, May 1995

No, this isn't yet another plea to ask you to volunteer to help the user group. You've heard that one before. Instead, this article discusses, from my personal point of view, the purposes of a user group. I've had intense experience with user groups all around the world and think my reflections on the subject apply to any group, anywhere.

Users Helping Users

What does this mean? What doesn't it mean? As a user group member, your primary purpose is to help other people. In return, you can expect to get help from other members when you need it. Notice the priority? Provide help first—expect help second. Even if you're a rank beginner with computers, it's a sure thing that you know something that the person sitting next to you doesn't know. Maybe you're totally lost with your new PC but if, for example, you're an account by trade, you can probably help the newbie sitting next to you to understand how much accounting he needs to know before he purchases his new accounting software. Or, if you found a particularly useful book that has helped you gain a glimmer of understanding about your computer, you can recommend it to the beginner next to you. Each of us brings our own set of ignorance and wisdom to each meeting. Hopefully, by working together we can share the wisdom and dispel ignorance.

There are no stupid questions. If you want to know the answer, the question isn't dumb. If you don't understand something, there is probably someone else who doesn't understand it too.

When you attend a user group meeting, it's important to respect other people's interests. If you don't care about telecommunications, don't criticize other people for their interest in the topic. Not all of us care about the same things, or care about them at the same technical level. As an expert (and a writer by trade), I might need to know how the company perceives its ability to compete with its rivals. You might attend the same meeting to learn about their printer support, or to learn what the vendor's product category is about. If someone asks a question that you already know the answer to, don't get upset; they won't be annoyed when you ask a technical question about a printer they don't care about. Questions on any level are appropriate.

A Vendor Appreciation Society?

The user group isn't about "making nice to vendors;" we aren't a vendor appreciation society. Nor is it about being intentionally nasty to them. Vendors present to user groups because (a) we represent the needs and wants of users, and (b) we're known to be a responsive audience. They know they can learn from us, as well as tell us about their products. It doesn't escape them that we're also, statistically, likely to spend a lot of money on computer hardware and software; doing "infomercials" to us is generally remunerative. That's fine, since most of us want to see the latest-and-greatest products. It's a symbiotic relationship. They want to tell us and we want to know.

But there's more to user groups than accepting whatever a vendor puts in front of us. The role of user groups, historically, has been to represent the needs of users—not just ourselves, but all users. That's how user groups got involved in wiping out copy protection. People stood up at vendors' presentations and said, "I won't buy your product if you use copy protection." They said it over and over again and eventually the software companies listened.

Much as vendors might hate the tough questions we ask them, they need to hear them. If you and I don't ask why our equipment isn't supported, or why it takes a half hour to get through on their tech support phone line, the vendor won't know how much we care—and they won't know how big a priority it is to fix the problem. If you don't ask the tough questions, you're doing a disservice to the user group and to yourself. I just finished doing a survey for a national magazine in which I saw vendor responses that said, repeatedly, "We have to have customer requests for that!" Guess what—you're the customer. If you don't request it, you don't get it.

Meeting Everyone's Needs

It is always a struggle in any users group to provide services of equal quality to beginners as well as power users. Anyone who is past the basics is able to help the beginners fairly well; we can all do a decent job of explaining how DIR works.

For those of us who are experts in our subjects, getting value can seem a little harder. I get tired of being the person who knows the answers; I like to get *my* questions answered, too. That's a large part of the reason that the user group is trying to emphasize SIG participation.

For instance, it's impossible to serve the needs of an avid programmer at a general meeting. The Programmer's SIG can focus on the questions and concerns of the people who write code, and can bring in outside expertise to address those issues. As a certified expert (how frightening!) you have no idea how enjoyable it is for me to sit in the audience for a change.

The user group has to find a balance in a lot of areas. We have to find a balance between "glitz" and "guts" in general meetings, alternating between neat technology demonstrations and hands-on how-to's that solve specific problems. We have to discuss topics that interest the experts, but don't leave the novices overwhelmed. Since DOS, Windows and OS/2 are all popular now we have to provide services that satisfy every group, and to make everyone of the user group's members delighted to fork over his or her dues each year.

It's obvious that we can't meet everyone's needs with 12 general meetings a year. We have to address people's interests with the special interest groups, and the services offered by each special interest group have to grow to be able to serve those that care about each subject. All the SIG leaders are working hard to do that. I hope you've noticed a marked increase in the number of preplanned special SIG activities. That's where you come in.

You have to participate—or there isn't a user group at all. If you care about desktop publishing, by golly, you have to show up at the Desktop Publishing SIG. If a SIG isn't giving you the kind of information you want to learn, you have to communicate that to the SIG leader, as a letter to the editor or to one of the user group board members. Even better, step forward and offer to help make it happen. That doesn't mean you have to do it, but you do have to help. And, like a lot of other activities that don't include computers at all, it's much more fun to participate than to watch.

(Esther Schindler is the vice-president of the Phoenix PC Users Group and co-ordinator of the OS/2 SIG. In real life, she is a computer consultant, primary SYSOP of ZiffNet's Executive On-Line Forum, a contributing editor to OS/2 Magazine, a freelance writer on anything to do with computers, and a chocoholic.)



SmartSuite Desktop Companion

Leatrice D. Pride

Reprinted from *User Friendly*, Journal of the Los Angeles Computer Society, June 1995

Lotus Development Corporation's SmartSuite integrates the 1-2-3 spreadsheet, Freelance Graphics for presentations, Ami Pro word processor, Approach database manager, and Organizer personal information manager. This book is a tutorial on all five programs. Depending on how familiar you are with the applications, you will either love or hate the book. Although it's a tutorial, not a reference, even the intermediate user may find it useful. The book was written by three different people, each good at selected applications. The authors may be contacted collectively by snail- or e-mail.

Since I've been using 1-2-3, Freelance and Organizer for years, I skipped those chapters. However, Approach was new to me. That chapter proved to be the best elementary tutorial I've seen in a long time: nothing is left to your imagination. For the rank beginner, it's great; for the "smart aleck" intermediate, it can be irksome. However, I soon learned that if you think you can skip the details, you may find yourself with the wrong result. Overall, the text is very easy to read, even humorous, but not insulting to the advanced user. It assumes a basic computer literacy and retains just enough repetition for reinforcement.

The exercises are well planned, with excellent illustrations and well-matched numbering. Some shortcuts are provided and a companion diskette includes all of the files used to create the figures arranged by chapter. There is an excellent index arranged by program and subject.

Appendix A leads you through some project exercises to demonstrate what working together is all about. It uses 1-2-3 and Ami Pro to provide detail on OLE. Appendix B is a quick review of the "extra" programs included in SmartSuite: 1-2-3 Guided Tour, Autographix Slide Service, Country Sorting, Dialog Editor Macro Translator, Media Manager, ScreenCam, ScreenCam Player, SmartCenter, and Sound. If I were to introduce a novice to any part of the Lotus SmartSuite, I would recommend this book as his/her training manual.

SmartSuite 3.0 Desktop Companion

By Patrick J. Burns with Robert Bixby & Jan Weingarten

Ventana press, 1994, 718 pages

List Price: \$25

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