EUGENE PCjr CLUB
NEWSLETTER
1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220, Eugene, OR 97401
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MAY 14 IBM PCjr CLUB MTG AGENDA

A> May 14 General Meeting will be held at the Ida Patterson School Library, 16th and Polk, Eugene. Set up and disk sales will start at 6:30pm, the meeting will begin at 7:00pm.

IS THE END NEAR?
- Jim McWilliams, President -

As you all know, April 9 was the Annual Meeting for election of new officers for our Club. The meeting was publicized in the Newsletter for the last two months. Only a handful of members showed up for the meeting. When the election of officers commenced, no nominations were received and no one volunteered for any of the offices.

A discussion was then held among the members present regarding the future of the Club. It is clear the Club cannot continue if no one is willing to take his/her turn of service. It was the consensus of the members present taht we have only three alternatives:

1) ~~Terminate the Club;~~
2) Combine our Club with the Eugene PC Club;
3) Elect officers at the May meeting.

All of these possible scenarios, or alternative scenarios, will be discussed at the May 14 meeting.

If the members wish to terminate the Club, the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority vote of the general membership. The Club currently has $750 in cash and a large library of software and blank disks. The Constitution also calls for these assets to be donated to a computer science department of a local high school, Lane Community College, or the University of Oregon upon dissolution of the Club. If the membership votes, at the May meeting, to combine with the Eugene PC Club, then a committee will have to be selected to negotiate with that club.

It is imperative for you to attend the May 14 meeting to vote for one of the three alternatives mentioned here. If you find it will be impossible to attend, send a signed and dated proxy vote to our Post Office Box, which must be received by May 13.

I hope there is an interest in continuing with our own Club. However, in order for this to happen, people must step forward and volunteer. This is a Club for the benefit of its members, administered by volunteers. If it is to continue to support the membership, then each member must eventually take his/her turn helping run the Club. It is a job that takes only a few hours each month. I think any of us should be able to make that sacrifice for one year out of our lives for all the benefits we have received. Will anyone step forward???

I'll see you at the May meeting!

DISK LIBRARY NEWS
- Louie Levy -

Many thanks to Sarah Eoyang for the latest update of GENEALOGY ON DISPLAY. If you purchased version 3.1 of this program, version 5.0 is now ready. As members are aware, all you have to do is bring in your original copy to receive your updated copy, free of charge. Thank you, Sarah!

By now, you game players have heard of Binary Systems' STARFLIGHT. This much-tooted game was released last year by Electronic Arts and has been getting real good reviews. Jin Cox has donated a preview copy of the program to the Club Library. This preview consists of three diskettes. There is a slide show, but it requires that you have at least 256K. The biggest hitch is that the program is very large! The demo diskettes (two of them) make it necessary for you to have two drives and at least 512K! If you meet this criterion, these demos are really nice. They are not copy-protected. In fact, Electronic Arts says to copy them and pass them around! The demo is interactive, allowing you to pick your own crew members for an exciting trip to other worlds. There are "1.5 billion places to explore...hundreds of conversations with 7 intelligent alien races...800 different planets, each with unique eco-systems...over 15 man-years in development." Maybe the last part tells why it took so long for them to write the program.

If your Junior will handle the interactive demo, how about checking it out for us and giving a demonstration of STARFLIGHT for the Club at one of our future meetings? Don't you wish that all software manufacturers would market their products this way?

REVIEW OF PCjr ARCADE GAMES II
- Cindy and Lindsey Hoffman -

No matter how much we may prefer to see our computers used, for productive and educational purposes; "arcades" are here to stay. And our Disk Librarians have done it again with PCjr ARCADE GAMES II, a collection of eight games with great color graphics and sound. Watch out! Adults are not immune to their appeal. Some games present such a challenge that the kids will have to make reservations to play. Several are good public domain versions of the successful commercial arcade games such as FROGGER, LODERUNNER, QBERT, and SPACE INVADERS.

The games on this disk present a good variety of skill levels for all ages to enjoy. They have all been debugged and should offer hours (weeks) of fun and entertainment for the whole family. Feeling a little hyper? Try HOPPER or BERT & THE SNAKE. Feeling adventurous? Try CAVERNS OF GINK. Feeling athletic? How about SKIING? Feeling heroic? Maybe BOUNCING BABIES is your game. Feeling aggressive? You're in luck with SPACE COMMANDERS and NITEFIRE. The favorite in our household is JANITOR JOE, a tremendously engaging program that holds the attention of player and spectator.

BERT and JOE and the BABIES are just begging to be a part of your disk library. You won't be disappointed!

SOME EXPANSION BOARD BLUES

-The Junior Report Jan. 87; Metro PCjr Journal; Paul Cedfeldt, New Jersey -

An epidemic of system crashes has broken out among many PCjr users with expanded memory who have had their computers for a year or more. Technicians think the problem stems from dirt or tarnish building up on the connector pins on the side of the system unit where the memory cars attach.

The problems take several forms. Some users report their systems will count only 128K of memory on startup, then boot. Others find their systems count 128K, report an "Error A", and then lock up. Sometimes the computer will, after repeated trying, find expanded memory and work properly, sometimes not.

In some instances, the computer will crash after counting all of the memory and booting; in others, it will report an "Error A" somewhere between 128K and the end of the memory count.

Some users who have removed their sidecars have found their system will work again once they replace it. Others have no luck after removing and replacing the memory boards.

The problem has been found with boards from TECMAR, IBM, and MICROSOFT. Lou Davidson, of Baltimore, who has upgraded memory boards for PCjr user groups, says customers have sent him a number of apparently faulty sidecars which he has been unable to get to fail in tests in his shop.

That is what has led him and partner Dave Wiseman to suspect a problem with the connector pins, which are part of the PCjr, not the memory boards. The boards have a set of female connectors into which the pins plug.

Davidson found a rash of similar complaints from PCj users on Compuserve's PCjr SIG. He recommends periodic cleaning of the connector pins using rubbing alcohol and an artist's brush with bristles long enough to reach into the pin housing, but not stiff enough to risk bending the pins.

Another problem reported by expansion board owners that we have read about is the sudden failure of the board after extended use. It seems the problem is due to a five volt regulator on the heat sink fin in the Tecmar JrCaptain expansion boards, which have had their memories increased to 512K. None of the other brands of expansion boards have reported this. This socket apparently can lose its retention force and become intermitten under the extra heat load of the 512K memory on some boards. The regulator and power supply can easily withstand the extra load, but not the inexpensive socket. The solution? Remove the cheap socket and solder the power supply cable directly to the board. So, as you can see, life isn't always perfect on the expansion board farm.

PRINT SPOOLERS

- Gene Moretti, FOX TALES, 3/87, Plainfield, Illinois -

Print spoolers are software programs that create a "holding tank" in RAM. That way, your file quickly dumps to the holding tank which stores the data in reserve and feeds it to the printer at a rate that the printer can accept the data. You can continue to work while the printer is printing. This allows you to continue to work at the keyboard, resulting in increased productivity.

PC-DESKMATES/PC-DESKTEAM

- Louie Levy, Disk Librarian -

Remember our disk #47, PC-DESKMATES? This fine program, written by Alternative Decision Software, has been completely updated. Our Disc Library now has version 1.04 of this program, whose name has been changed to PC-DESKTEAM. It is meant to be used as a resident program that may be called up while using other programs or DOS. Without leaving the program you are using, you may call up an alarm clock, a calculator, calendar, note pad, phone directory and dialer, or a listing of selected DOS commands. DESKTEAM allows your computer to function as an electronic typewriter, either directly or with a buffer. It is menu-driven, has help facilities, and can be used either memory resident or as a stand alone program.

PC-DESKTEAM requires a system with only 128K, but you should be aware that as the program itself will require half of this memory, you will have little left to run other software unless you have increased the capacity of your Junior. There is a 60-page user's guide on the disk.

Most Junior users probably do not need this program and would find its use somewhat awkward. For most of us, it is easier to dial our own phones and use an electronic calculator or a small pad of paper by our computers. But for those in a busy office setting where their computer is their main co-worker, PC-DESKTEAM is a very nice utility to have waiting in the back of their memory. They will be reminded of its being there every hour when the clock chimes.

If you have purchased DESKMATES from our Disk Library, you can bring back your ORIGINAL diskette and we will trade you, free of course, a new copy for your old as part of our Club's Free Update policy. Aren't you a glad you're a member?

BUFFERS

- Gene Moretti, Fox Tales, 4/87, Plainfield, Illinois -

A disk buffer is a block of memory that DOS uses to hold data being read from or written to a disk. The more buffers DOS has, the more data is in memory at any given time. Before DOS reads or writes to disk, it checks to see if the sector containing that data is already in a buffer. If it is, DOS simply transfers the data out of the buffer without reading the sector from the disk. This is a great time-saving tool, both in reading and writing records.

If no buffer amount is set in the CONFIG.SYS file, the default value is 2 (3 on the IBM AT). The disadvantage of having too many buffers open is that each additional buffer increases the resident size of DOS by 528 bytes; therefore, the amount of memory available to the application is reduced by that amount.

MEMBERS, PLEASE NOTE

Check the date on your mailing label. The date shown is your renewal for your membership and/or Newsletter subscription. Please keep your membership active and renew your dues BEFORE they expire. Thank you!

Paddy Dawson, Editor

HEARD ON THE STREET
-Dick Page-

Don't believe printer speed test claims. Condensed from PC WORLD, February 1987, p.266. In testing three printers for an article in PC WORLD magazine, speed test results varied widely from the claims of the printer manufacturers. This is what they found:

Printer Name	Claim	Actual
ToshibaP321		
Draft Speed	216 cps	108 cps
Letter "	72 cps	44 cps
Epson LQ800		
Draft Speed	180 cps	110 cps
Letter "	60 cps	52 cps
NEC Pinwriter P6		
Draft Speed	216 cps	115 cps
Letter "	65 cps	50 cps

The main reason for the discrepancy is that printer manufacturers measure only "burst speed." Burst speed is the speed at which the printer prints when it's in the middle of the line. The Epson manual calls this "characters per second per line."

Real world phenomena such as carriage returns, line feeds, and form feeds aren't considered when measuring burst speed. So, we people in the real world can never hope to match the manufacturers' numbers. The type style used can also alter the speed. Elite can print faster and that is what the manufacturers use. However, many real people use pica face, thus slowing their output.

One consolation is that speed test "fudging" is pretty standardized throughout the printer industry. Therefore, relative comparisons of printer speeds between models and brands is of value, even if they don't reflect real world speeds.

PC-FILE is now PC-FILE+. Buttonware has just published a major upgrade of PC-FILE and renamed it PC-FILE+. It has 175 help screens and a new "Teach Mode" that explains each step as you perform it. Buttonware claims PC-FILE+ menus are simplified and the macros easy to define. Also, it is supposed to be much faster. Searches are 2-10 times faster, printing is twice as fast, and sorting is 2-5 times faster. PC-FILE+ requires at least 384K with 2 disk drives.

They have "included the ability to print sophisticated reports; paint entry screen; imbed calculations in reports, databases, and relational fields; password protect individual features; drop to DOS, and more."

The new version sells for $69.95 (plus $5 shipping) for new users and upgrades are available for current registered users for $25 (plus $5 shipping). Hopefully, a shareware demo version will be available soon for PC-FILE+ ,just like there has been for PC-FILE. If so, our Disk Library will carry it and you can try it before becoming a Buttonware Registered User.

PC-FILE Templates Available. CTA has developed pre-defined database application (templates) to provide you with a quick and efficient entry into the use of Buttonware's PC-FILE and PC-FILE/r. Templates are available for creating the following databases: address books, books, business contacts, church records, coins, coupons, home inventories, personal records, photologs, pre-pay invoices, purchase order invoices, and video libraries.

Each application template includes a database structure with example records, ready-to-use report and label formats, smart keys, a snapshot mailing label definition and sample mail-merge letters. Each one is accompanied by on-disk documentation which provides tips and suggestions. Cost is $15 per template ($13 if 3 or more are purchased), plus $2.50 shipping and handling per order.

CTA also has a software program called DUPES! which scans PC-FILE documents to mark, list, or delete all duplicate records. It sells for $22.50 plus the $2.50 for shipping and handling.

The address for CTA (Computer Templates and Applications) is: P.O. Box 5614, Bellevue, WA 98006.

Clearing Up Version Numbers. As you may have noticed, many software programs have a version number included after the program's name. While the intention of including this number is to help clarify whether the program has been revised, it often just leads to confusion. Maybe some comments on version numbers will help.

The first thing to know is that there is NO standard in the industry. They can do whatever they want. So, comparisons can be deceiving.

Generally speaking, when a program first comes on the market, it is labeled Version 1 or Version 1.0. If a substantial change or numerous little changes are then made, the updated version jumps a full number. Version 1.0 then becomes Version 2.0. If only a few minor changes are made in the program, the version may only change one or two tenths of a point. Thus, Version 2.1 may become Version 2.2.

Muddling the picture, some software publishers add letters (V3.4A2), or they call the first version available to the public V2.0. Their reasoning is that the original "rough cut" pre-release trial version, usually called "Beta version", should be considered Version 1.0.

Remember that major upgrades, as from V3.0 to V4.0, may cause you more heartaches than pleasure. The software publisher may have rushed out this "major improvement" without adequately testing it. If you have V3.0, you may want to wait for V4.1 rather than buying V4.0. The minor upgrade to V4.1 might be just getting rid of all the glitches in the major upgrade to V4.0.

Also, in comparing similar types of software, don't use the version number as the determiner of which program to buy. One company's brand, new program (V1.0) may have fresh, innovative features and thus be better than another company's long-standing program which has undergone many revisions.

Good luck choosing software. Just remember: "It's a jungle out there. Buyer Beware!"

NEEDED: Greeting and Christmas cards, new and used. Also needed, paper used on one side only. Call 689-9337.

COMPUTER CHRONICLES

The Computer Chronicles is shown at noon on Sundays on Oregon Public Television, KOAC-TV, channel 7. Each program includes current news items, hardware and software reviews, and a featured topic.

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Ads should be placed two weeks before the next Club meeting. All ads are cash/check in advance.

Our Club members are seeking high quality, competitively priced hardware and software for our Juniors. We'd like to hear from you!

EUGENE PCjr CLUB

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