NOVEMBER 12 IBM PCjr CLUB MTG

A> November 12 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.

GREETINGS!
- Mike Luttio, Eugene IBM PCjr Club President, Eugene, Oregon -

Last month's Club meeting had several interesting topics and was very well attended. I would like to thank Dick Page for his excellent presentation on RAM disk operations on computers. He informed the Club about the different varieties of programs available for setting up and running RAM disks on the PCjr. A lot depends on what hardware configuration you have and how much memory is available. Dick provided some printed information which is available at Club meetings.

SUPER BOULDERDASH was demonstrated by Dick also. It is a very interesting maze/arcade game that runs very well on the PCjr. The color and sound are excellent, and the game is very addicting. It is available for $10-$15 from mail order or local software stores.

I was able to demo BIG BLUE DISK, one of the many diskette magazines now available. A quick review is written up in this issue. I plan on showing some of the other disk magazines at future meetings to allow some comparison of features.

Our Club meeting is scheduled every month on the second Thursday evening, at 7:00pm. The meeting place is the library at Ida Patterson Elementary School. Disk sales start at 6:30pm and continue during the program break. Come and join the rest of the Club members and enjoy viewing some of the latest software and the other fun things you can do with your computer; the PCjr, of course.

The EUGENE IBM PCjr NEWSLETTER is available for $12/year, or as part of the paid-up Eugene PCjr Club membership at $20/year. You may obtain one free copy of the Newsletter on request before subscribing. The overworked Editor accepts no responsibility for the accuracy or reliability of the information, opinions, or materials contained in this Newsletter. Reprint permission is freely given; please credit the appropriate author and the EUGENE PCjr CLUB NEWSLETTER. All contributions are gratefully accepted.

Make check or money order out to:

EUGENE PCjr CLUB, 1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220, Eugene, OR 97401; with the following:

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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!

DISKETTE MAGAZINE REVIEW
BIG BLUE DISK
- Mike Luttio, Eugene, Oregon -

BIG BLUE DISK is one of the multitude of diskette magazines that are now available for personal computers. Many of these magazines can be purchased individually at your local software store or by subscription. The general idea of these magazines is to present helpful hints on DOS; present a forum for shareware authors to present their programs; allow preview of proprietary software; and to update readers on the latest in hardware and software.

BIG BLUE DISK provides an easy-to-use menu of contents which you scroll through and select the highlighted topic of interest. There are introduction and letters sections, and other sections including: Fun 'n Games, one or two interesting games to play; Brainware, programs to test your thought process; Helpware, programs you can use for home or school; Picture This, a continuing computer video show; the Happy Hacker, articles to assist you in understanding how your computer and programs work, also help and hints on programming; Blue Plate Special, a special peek at proprietary software; and the rest, reader interaction section, credits, etc.

BIG BLUE DISK comes in a two-disk format and costs $9.95 for each monthly issue. Subscriptions are available from BIG BLUE DISK, P.O. Box 30008, Shreveport, LA 71130-0008. (6 months for $39.95; 1 year/$69.95). System requirements are: DOS 2.0 or higher, 256K RAM.

Reason to Celebrate!

AN ADDITION TO THE DAWSON FAMILY

Congratulations to Allen and Paddy Dawson. Paul John Reid Dawson, 16 months old, recently became a much loved member of the family. How lucky they all are!

Q. I tried to make a new boot disk. But I find that after copying DOS, I don't have enough space left for some other utilities. What is up?

A. You probably made your new copy using DISKCOPY. The DOS 2.1 disk supplied by IBM is single-sided, so you end up with another single-sided disk. Try again, only this time, format a blank floppy using the /S parameter to make sure the hidden files are transferred. Then use COPY *.* to move the other DOS files to your new disk. You'll have plenty of space for other utility files. (FOX VALLEY PCjr ASSOC., Plainfield, IL, 9/87)

NEEDED: Greeting and Christmas cards, new and used. Also needed, paper used on one side only. Call 689-9337 for more information.
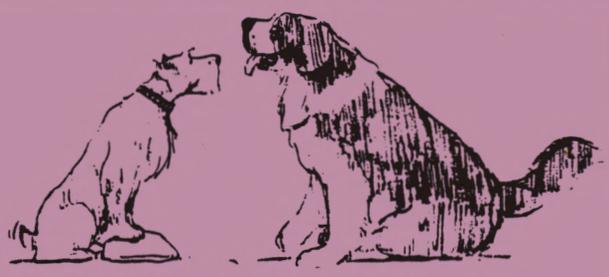
HEARD ON THE STREET
- Dick Page, EUGENE IBM PCjr CLUB,
Eugene, Oregon -

INCREASED SPEED WITH INCREASED
BUFFERS: Ordinarily, DOS reserves
two buffers as memory storage
areas to reduce the need for disk
access. That's fine for programs
that use only one or two buffers
for disk operations. But disk-
intensive applications like data-
base managers and local-area
networks perform better with more
working space. With more buffers,
DOS can move larger blocks of data
from disk with each disk access,
and disk sectors that a program
constantly accesses are likely to
be in a buffer when that program
needs them. The result is faster
disk input/output (O/I). To
increase the number of working
buffers, you can add a BUFFERS
statement to your CONFIG.SYS
start-up file. The following
statement, for example,
establishes 16 buffers in memory:
                BUFFER=16
The optimum number of buffers
depends on your computer, the
amount of memory, and the types of
programs you use. If you reserve
too many buffers, DOS might spend
more time managing buffers than it
would to read a disk sector. So
experiment with different values
to find out what works best.
Remember that each disk buffer
uses 528 bytes of RAM. (Bill
Pemberton, PC RESOURCE Magazine,
May 1987) [NOTE: More on the
BUFFERS statement can be found in
your DOS manual, pp 4-5 through 4-
7 in DOS version 2.1; for help
altering your CONFIG.SYS file, ask
at a club meeting].

ALMOST OUT OF THIS WORLD: Tired of
flying your MICROSOFT FLIGHT
SIMULATOR CESSNA? Want bigger
challenges, higher thrills? Maybe
it's time to fly at Mach 3. With
Chuck Yeager's ADVANCED FLIGHT
SIMULATOR by ELECTRONIC ARTS, you
can test pilot 14 different
aircraft; from the P-51 "mustang"
to the Bell X-1. ELECTRONIC ARTS
claims this is "easy to learn and
a lot more fun" than M.S. FLIGHT
SIMULATOR. Test your abilities to
fly in formation, with Chuck's
plane at your wingtip, through
gates and slalom courses and
around skyscrapers. As with many
games, this one lists for $39.95.

If you have FLIGHT SIMULATOR but
have grown tired or frustrated
with it, you may want to purchase
one of COMPUTE!'s several books
written for this program. Check
your local bookstore or call
COMPUTE! Publications at 1-800-
346-6767. They range in price
from $9.95 to $12.95.

SOFTWARE PUBLISHING CORPORATION,
maker of the PFS: series and the
IBM ASSISTANT series, has
purchased CLICK ART PERSONAL
PUBLISHER. In keeping with the
approach taken with the other
programs in the PFS: series, FIRST
PUBLISHER is less complex, more
straight forward than more
expensive desktop publishing
programs. Compared to other
similar programs for under $100,
it is faster, more fully
functional, with lazer support and
higher resolution printouts. The
program is definitely a major
upgrade of the CLICK ART program.
The biggest hangup for PCjr owners
is that it requires a "maxed-out"
PCjr with a second drive and full
640K (RACORE's add-ons work fine).

PROGRAMMING HABITS

- Mike Lyons, The Orange County IBM PC Users Group, EXCHANGE/Issue 3, 1987 -

From looking at a lot of code over the past few years, I have developed certain work habits that have made working with computer languages easier for me and anyone else who has to make changes to my programs. These ideas are not new (although life would be easier if more people practiced them), and are not specific to any particular language.

HABIT #1: The more time spent understanding the problem and planning the program, the less time it takes to code it. In addition, the program tends to be more efficient, and errors are reduced. Instead of sitting down at the keyboard and hacking away, try drawing a flow chart of what you want to do. Not only will this help crystallize the problem for you, but a well-done flow chart will actually contain everything you need to code. A well-written program is easy to read and easy to maintain. A flow chart forces you to structure your program and your ideas. You should notice, for example, that your code should contain a lot fewer GOTO statements. One of my professors said, "GOTOs are like nuclear bombs; they are nice to have but you never want to use one." To him, GOTOs in a program meant an automatic "F." Needless to say, everyone learned to do all the assignments without using GOTO statements. It just meant spending more time planning up front. I think a total ban on GOTO statements is a little drastic, but they should be used sparingly. If you find your program is full of GOTOs, you probably didn't spend enough time setting up your logic.

HABIT #2: Comment your programs. Even if no one else ever sees your code, you should comment it. What looks so obvious to you now may look totally foreign the next time, even though only a few weeks passed since you worked on it. And pity the other person who has to work on it for the first time. I have talked to programmers who proudly show me a nifty routine that took them only a week to figure out, but it has no comments. If it took a week to develop, why not take another minute to comment on it? Some programmers contend that program contents slow down a program and take up space. But program comments don't slow a well-written program down that much (after all, no one really cares if you use an extra 500 nanoseconds). And computer time is a lot cheaper than programmer time. If you really want maximum speed out of your PC, compile your programs. Some years back, an IBM study on mainframe computers showed that (1) the average life of a program was three to five years, and (2) from the time a program was created until it was no longer used, 85% of the lifetime cost was in maintenance.

HABIT #3: Keep it simple. Anyone can write complicated code that is hard to follow. The trick is to do it the most efficient and simplest way. Label your routines so they are easy to find. Also, if you insist on using meaningless labels to save keystrokes, include a Table of Terms that tells you what your variables stand for.

I hope these thoughts prevent you from spending hours trying to figure out what a section of code does, or why it is even there.

WRITERS WANTED FOR
BUSINESS SOFTWARE REVIEW

BUSINESS SOFTWARE REVIEW is a magazine that enables its readers to become more knowledgeable participants in today's software marketplace. It will emphasize the impact of software on productivity, profitablity and decision-making. Coverage will include applications and systems software for the entire range of business computer environments: mainframe, mini- and personal computers.

Departments are: THE FIRST WORD, brief clips of the month's hottest software news; PERSPECTIVES, editor's commentary on recent doings in the software product and service industry; REVIEW & ANALYSIS, in-depth analysis of major product developments in areas such as computer graphics, spreadsheets, word processing, general accounting software, data base management and programmer productivity; INSIDER'S REPORT, BUSINESS SOFTWARE REVIEW exclusives, Software Marketplace, an examination of major trends in the software product and service industry, including book reviews and industry surveys of interest to software and service buyers; PROFILES, in-depth looks at newsmaking companies and people; READER'S COMMENTARY, letters to the editor and bylined statements of opinion from representatives of the community of both software sellers and their customers; COMMUNICATIONS, LANS, WANS, micro-to-mainframe links, PC networks, "workgroup" computing, and more; SOFTWARE REVIEW, formal reviews of individual or classes of products; INFORMATION CENTER, latest developments and ideas in information center software; and OFFICE SYSTEMS, new goings-on in office information systems.

EDITORIAL POLICY: Product information or other news should be submitted at least two months prior to listed closing dates. Editorial input request forms are available upon request.

GUIDELINES: Press releases should be concise, to the point and relevant to ICP publication editorial. New product information should cover key functions and features of the product and should describe the application hardware environment. This information should be devoid of sales pitches and should be straightforward and factual. Information concerning corporate and personnel achievements should be factual, concise, typed (double-spaced) and accompanied by graphs and/or graphics when applicable. Always include the telephone number of a person who can be contacted for further information.

UNSOLICITED ARTICLES: The editor accepts for review articles submitted by persons outside the editorial staff.

Articles should deal with new software technologies; new product concepts; innovative uses of existing technologies; exceptional case studies; how-to subjects such as buy, evaluate, contract, implement; emerging trends; and state-of-the-art information management. Articles should be well-written, be typed and double-spaced, relate user experiences, have appropriate photographs or illustrations, be no longer than 2500 words, include a 45-50 word biographical sketch of author, plus a black and white photograph of the author.

In all cases, it is best to contact the editor regarding unsolicited submissions. Prospective authors should write a brief synopsis of the proposed article and send it to the editor. Three weeks should be allowed for a response.

Send articles or proposals to Louis Harm, Editor of BUSINESS SOFTWARE REVIEW at ICP World Software Information Center 9100 Keystone Crossing Suite 200, Indianapolis, IN 46240.

AIDS ALERT
- Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D. Report on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome -

AIDS no longer is the concern of any one segment of society; it is the concern of us all. No American's life is in danger if he/she or their sexual partners do not engage in high risk sexual behavior or use shared needles or syringes to inject illicit drugs into the body. People who engage in high risk sexual behavior or who shoot drugs are risking infection with the AIDS virus and are risking their lives and the lives of others, including their unborn children.

Be educated, be prepared. Learn as much about AIDS as you can. Learn to separate scientific information from rumor and myth. The Public Health Service, your local health officials, and your family physician will be able to help you. For more information nationally, call the toll-free AIDS Hotline 1-800-342-AIDS.

NOTE: In the Eugene-Springfield area, for more information, please call the WILLAMETTE AIDS COUNCIL at 345-7089. Or contact Paddy Dawson, Vice-Chair of the WILLAMETTE AIDS COUNCIL, at 503/689-9337.

PROBLEMS WITH BASIC
- SF PC Jr Users Group, 7/1987 -

Unfortunately, most Ramdisks (and other memory resident programs) reside in low memory and interfere with the loading of PCjr cartridge BASIC. When this happens you will get an "out of memory" message, and your system will be locked up. Only the Tecmar Ramdisk, when used with their memory management, avoids this problem. The Ramdisk resides at the top of memory to avoid BASIC, but it won't speed up the operations of programs by forcing them into expansion memory.

Unless you have a need for the special PCjr BASIC commands, the solution is to use standard PC BASICA.COM. This is the program on the DOS disk. You must have a BASIC cartridge to use it; but if you rename it PC BASICA.COM or any other name with the .COM ending, it will run with Ramdisks or resident programs installed. Furthermore, if run in expansion memory, it will be almost 50% faster than PCjr BASIC. Try this on games that are easy. They will be much more interesting.

After adding PC BASICA.COM to the disk and allowing for several DOC files, over half the disk is still empty. There is room for whatever you want. How about a file management program or DOS shell, a calculator, an appointment calendar, a printer control program, DEBUG, a game, additional utilities, alternate CONFIG and AUTOEXEC files for other boots, etc. There are many possibilities depending upon your particular needs or interests.

I hope that building this prototype boot disk has given you some new ideas. Now, go build your own and tailor it to suit your applications or build several, each for a specific set of programs.

EXPANSION BOARD BLUES
- OKjr, Oklahoma City, 6/7 1987 -

According to several messages on the CompuServe PCjr SIG as well as items in the Junior Report (Illinois) and the Metro PC Journal (Washington, D>C>), a lot of Junior owners with extra memory have been reporting problems of system crashes. The circumstances of the crashes aren't always alike, but the technicians quoted in these stories say the cause is probably the same -- corroded connector pins on the Junior's sidecar attachment.

Some users have reported that their Juniors will recognize only 128K of memory on booting, then run all right. Others get 128K, then lock up, or an "Error A" message somewhere between 128K and the end of the memory check, and then lockup.

A few have found that rebooting will get them going again, at least temporarily, while others have found that removing a sidecar and then replacing it will completely clear up the problem.

These problems have been found with most of the brands of sidecars. One technician, Lou Davidson of MSC in Baltimore, who has upgraded memory boards for Junior user groups, says he has been sent several apparently faulty sidecars which then test out OK.

This led him and partner Dave Wiseman to believe that the problem is with the connector pins, which are on the Junior motherboard's bus connection. All the sidecar boards have female connectors.

The experience of some users in solving their crash problems with removal and reattachment of a sidecar is an indication that dirty connections are indeed the culprit, because in minor cases of this, just the friction from the unseating and reseating of the connectors will rub away whatever gunk is preventing a good contact.

Not everyone who crashes has been lucky enough to get going again by just taking a sidecar off and putting it back. But this is remedied easily enough (if dirty connections are really the only problem) by periodic cleaning of the connectors.

There are a number of ways to do this; for a bad case it wouldn't hurt to rub the pins with emery cloth or sandpaper (it's not easy to get in between the rows but it can be done), naturally being careful to remove the residue and to see that none of the pins is pointing off in some new direction. You don't have to get every part of every pin; just be sure most of the end of each pin looks shiny.

This isn't recommended as a regular practice; for routine cleaning, use an artist's brush or a foam swab to apply contact cleaner to the connector pins, and also to the sidecar sockets. There are several brands of this available, such as the aerosol used to clean mechanical TV tuners. WD-40 is also a possibility here.

You could also use tape head cleaner or denatured alcohol. Don't use rubbing alcohol because it almost always contains glycerine or other kinds of emollients that are nice for rubbing but leaves behind their own kind of grudge on electrical components.

Happy Thanksgiving!

The EUGENE PCjr NEWSLETTER will accept advertising as follows:

COMMERCIAL AD RATES/insertion:
     1 page - $18.00
     1/2 page - $ 9.00
     1/4 page - $ 5.00

CLASSIFIED: "For Sale" ads are $2 per 25 words for commercial transactions; free to members where information only is exchanged.

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!

Q. How do you know when an Appleworks user has been sitting at your computer?

A. There's White-Out on the screen. (CAPJUG CONNECTION, Glenview, IL, Vol 3, No. 2)

DISK UPDATE: New low prices, same high quality programs! For members; 1 disk program from our Club Library for $3 or 2 for $5. For non-members; 1 for $4 or 2 for $7. For mailing, add $1.50 for postage and handling.

ARTICLES NEEDED

The idea behind our Eugene PCjr Club is "users helping users." Please share some of your experience and expertise by writing an article for our award-winning Newsletter. For more information, call Paddy Dawson, Editor, at 689-9337.

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