

NEWS

Vol 4

North Texas IBM Personal Computer Users Group

No. 4

Special Interest Programs

Programmers 12 noon - Imperial Room
Dr. Neil Bennett

Chairman Neil Bennett was back from his Australia trip and in attendance, but the meeting was led by Jim Hoisington as it has been for the past several months. The potpourri of topics discussed included: the new 1.2Mb HC diskettes and how they differ from other 96 tpi diskettes. Only diskettes especially designed for these drives, usually marked "HC" or "HD" should be used in these drives. 360Kb diskettes can be read and written in the HC drive, but those which have been written cannot reliably be read by a 360Kb drive.

The MicroFocus and Realia COBOL compilers were discussed. Both were thought very good, and the Realia seemed almost completely compatible with mainframe COBOL. dBase III's Softguard copy protection was discussed. One member had his directories destroyed while trying to 'uninstall' dBase from his hard disk. Several products for recovering files and directories were recommended, including the Norton Utilities and Disk Tool Kit (formerly PC-Zap). Copy protection schemes in general were reviled by all present. One member warned that many of the copy protection schemes that allow a program to be 'installed' on a hard disk are not compatible and installing more than one such may produce unexpected (and undesirable) results.

Modems, internal and external, were then discussed. 2400 baud modems are already on the market and dropping in price; 4800 baud modems are expected shortly. The 2400 baud standard is an international standard, unlike the Bell 300 and 1200 baud standards which are not used in Europe. *Carrington Dixon*

Beginners 9:00am - Embassy Room
John Hall

BASIC 9:00 am - Ambassador Rm
John Keohane

We have both a new location and a new leader. Mike Durbin has gone to Alabama. John Keohane will be

leading this group. John says that the usual routine of questions and answers will be followed. Not knowing what the blackboard/easel situation will be like at our new Holiday Inn location, John suggests a discussion of the GOOD books you've read on BASIC. He says, "...there are some really obscure books out there which are close to useless for anything in the real world. Let's forget about those and concentrate on the good ones. Bring one or two of your best BASIC books to the meeting for show and tell." *Editor*

Business 12 noon - Embassy Room
Burke/Talbott/Fries

Representatives from Western Union will talk about Easylink. Easylink provides businesses which have access to a computer and a modem an extremely effective and economical means of communications. *- Ricky Burke*

Beginning Assem 9:00 am - Imperial Rm
John Wolley

Getting (Re)Organized: We want to find out who's interested in what, and see if we can work out a program which will accommodate the most interesting topics at the experience level desired by as many people as possible. The general plan for each meeting is to have a structured presentation on an announced topic for the first half hour or so, then an open format, question and answer, get-your-problems-solved session the remainder of the time.

Next Topic: Graphic File Format Conversion. *John Wolley*

(For a complete listing of room assignments and meeting times, see page 5. Ed.)

A G E N D A

Presentation for our April meeting was not determined at press time.

Next Meeting April 13 1985
Holiday Inn, Crowne Plaza
LBJ Freeway at Midway Road, Dallas, Texas
(Schedule on page 5 - Map on page 2)

NEW!



North Texas PC NEWS
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Deadlines:

All material for publication in PC NEWS (articles and ads) must be received by the NEWS staff no later than the fourth Friday of the month prior to publication.

Articles:

Column width is 56 characters. Article submission is preferred by modem (817-275-4109 / Startext 51563), or disk (ASCII format), unjustified. Double spaced, typewritten written copy is acceptable.

North Texas IBM Personal Computer Users Group

A non-profit, independent group, not associated with IBM Corporation. The Group meets on the second Saturday of each month. See page 1 for meeting time and place.

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Special Interest Groups:

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	& Ed Fries	(214)783-8543
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Bulletin Board SYSOP: open

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E d i t o r i a l

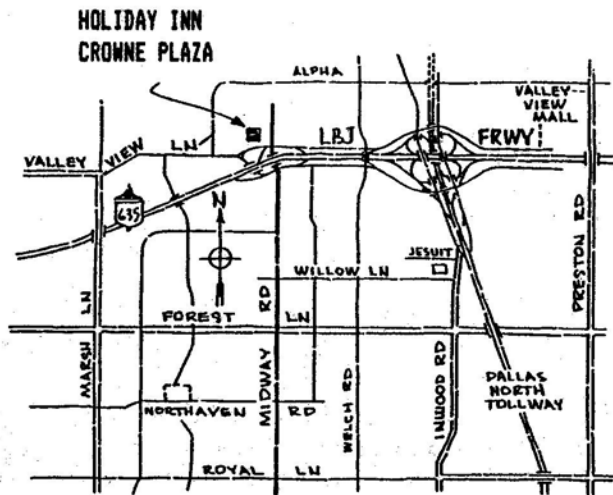
Mike Durbin has been a very active member of our User Group for several years. In fact, you could say he is one of our charter members! He has been active in the SIG program from day one, starting out as the leader of the Beginners Group in August 1982. He wrote many articles for the newsletter under the "Beginners' Corner" banner, while leading the Beginners SIG. In early 1984, Mike found a successor to lead the Beginners, and took over as leader of the BASIC Applications group. He was elected to the Board of Directors of NT IBM PC Users Group in February of this year.

Mike Durbin is moving out of the Metroplex. He has accepted a position in Huntsville, Alabama, with SCI Systems, Inc., a producer of electronic subassemblies and end user products. We'll miss you, Mike. Good luck!

N O T I C E

Next month's PC NEWS will include the annual member telephone listing. If either your work or home phone number has changed since your original membership application was submitted, chances are your listing in our files is incorrect. Please notify Bob Russell, PC NEWS Circulation Manager, if you have a change. If you do not want your phone numbers published, notify the Editor. Notification must be received before April 26.

Next Meeting



Of Spreadsheets, ... particularly LOTUS

by John Keohane

Spreadsheets are marvelous, and do great things with numbers. It is important to consider what they can do. I have LOTUS 1-2-3, and recently began using it for presenting the monthly income and expense statements of the Dallas chapter of the Data Processing Management Association. Use of this spreadsheet is a marvelous time and effort saver, over the manual/calculator, typewriter system of my predecessor as Treasurer.

The Dallas DPMA has 30 accounts, 7 for income, and 23 for expenses. Before 1985 began, five persons, including myself, served on a budget committee. Later the board approved budget amounts for 1985. Each month the treasurer is to show that month's cash income and expenses, expenditures for the year-to-date and budget for that portion of the year, and for the entire year. Using a cash system of accounting, and relatively few checks per month, LOTUS is super. Under LOTUS, column A has the account names, column B this month income amounts, column C this month expense amounts, column D year-to-date actual, income or expense. Column E is the year-to-date budget, column F has the full year budget. Those are the columns we print.

We keep additional detail. January actual is in column G, February in column H, and the other months are in columns I through T. Each row's year-to-date income in column D is given by a formula, as the sum of columns G through T, for that particular row. Similarly, each year-to-date budget is calculated as that row's total year budget, from column F, divided by 12, times a special unprinted field containing the month value, such as "4" for April. A change in that unprinted field from a value of "4" to a value of "5" will change all thirty accounts' year-to-date budget figures from 4/12 to 5/12 of the year's budget.

This month income and expense amounts, columns B and C, are also given by formula, with two, not thirty, formula changes per month, by the use of the COPY command. One change each month is for the income formulas, the other for the expense formulas. For April, for example, each of the 7 income accounts has a formula in column B which says take this row's amount from column J. In May, each of those 7 will say to take this row's amount from column K. With the use of the COPY command, the modified formula only needs to be entered once. One use of the COPY command will take care of the rest.

Though LOTUS is very helpful, it won't do everything. You probably already know that from all the hype about Framework and Symphony, which include data base, communications, and sophisticated word-processing along with spreadsheets. Even in it's spreadsheet accounting function, LOTUS has it's limitations. For cash basis accounting, with a small number of monthly transactions, as is the case with Dallas DPMA, it works well. If, however, you've chosen accrual accounting, or if you have more than the twelve to twenty entries DPMA sees monthly, you might be well advised to look at some accounting software. More of that later.

John

EASYLINK

by Ricky Burke

Easylink provides businesses which have access to a computer and a modem an extremely effective and economical means of communications. Letters and documents may be sent in one of three ways. If the recipient also has an Easylink or Telex subscription, the document may be sent through the electronic mail facility. Otherwise, it can be sent to the nearest Western Union office, and from there be printed and sent by regular mail, or by courier for same day delivery. Overnight and 2 hour delivery is available in all major U.S. cities at 40% less than conventional express services (this is soon to be expanded for world wide deliveries).

The electronic mail service also offers a bulletin board service where anyone can read messages you post, and a 'group send' feature where a single message can be sent simultaneously to several addresses.

Representatives from Western Union will talk about Easylink at the April meeting of the Business SIG.

- Ricky



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Sec. D April 15 - 19 9:00am - 4:00 pm
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Sec. D April 10 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm
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Class #500
FRAMEWORK WEEK
Sec. C April 22 - 26 9:00am - 4:00 pm
Course Fee: 425

Class #520
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Sec. D April 23 & 24 6:30pm - 9:30 pm
Course Fee: 70

Class #550
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Sec. C April 16 & 17 6:30pm - 9:30pm
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Ergonomics For You and Your Computer

by Sandy Bogaert



This article is a reprint from the January, 1985 newsletter of the Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey.

Have you ever gone home after a long day at your computer with your neck muscles so tight that you couldn't turn your head?

To end your aches and pains, you might choose to buy an ergonomically designed chair and desk. Ergonomics, translated from Latin, means "work Management". Most experts agree that a more practical meaning is "flexibility in the work place."

Desk-top computer users most commonly complain about back and neck ailments, circulation problems and eyestrain. The goal of ergonomically designed furniture is to ease these strains through flexibility. The furniture should adapt to the person, not vice versa.

SELECTING A CHAIR: Because the human body comes in a staggering diversity of shapes and sizes, designing the perfect chair is no easy task.

Some things to consider in selecting a chair:

1. The front of the chair should be rounded off to avoid restricted flow in the user's legs.
2. The seat cushion should have only light padding so that pressure areas can change easily.
3. The seat material should be of a porous material to allow body heat to dissipate.
4. Backrest should be high enough to hit the lower inches of the shoulder blade. The bottom of the backrest should support the vertebrae at the base of the spine, helping the back to hold a slight forward arch.
5. Seat height from the floor should be adjustable 6 to 9 inches up or down.

Footrests should be provided: For shorter people who must raise their chairs to work at the desk's level, and for improving the angle of the foot when it is in a resting position.

SELECTING A DESK: When using a computer on a standard desk, many users must compensate for furniture inflexibility. They shift themselves around by leaning forward, backward or to the side, or they stretch or slouch to adjust to the machine's height.

Ergonomically designed desks should be adjustable to almost any position. They typically include a split desk top - one half for the computer screen and the other half for the keyboard. Each half should move independently and should tilt forward and backward. Height adjustment is also important. The desk should be designed so that the controls on the computer are within easy reach. Users should not have to raise their shoulders or slouch to comfortably use the keyboard.

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a Federal government research organization, recently conducted a study that showed that workers, while sitting in ergonomic office environments, improved productivity by a dramatic 24.7%.

A well designed desk and chair may cure the pains of working in modern offices and may help improve productivity as well.

Sandy Bogaert

Meeting Location

This month our meeting will be at Holiday Inn, Crowne Plaza, LBJ and Midway Rd. Meeting times and rooms are as follows:

ROOM ASSIGNMENTS

Room	9	10	11	12	1	2
Embassy	!Beginners!				! Business Appl. !	
Imperial	!Assembly !		Main Meeting		! Advanced Prog. !	
Ambassador	! BASIC !		Plaza Ballroom		! Engr/Science !	
Continental	V E N D O R S					



DISK OF THE MONTH

by Doug Windham

APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

If you are looking for a specific type of public-domain program, please let me know what you are looking for. I see hundreds of programs each month and must select just a few diskettes full each month. I do not make copies of everything I see because I try to eliminate some poor quality, or old versions of programs already in the library.

APRIL 1985

(Double-sided 9-sector)

PC-WRITE Version 2.4 by Bob Wallace from Quicksoft. The new features include decimal tabs, more printers supported (45 config files), all keys can be defined (like Prokey or Newkey), repaging, and more. PC-WRITE will work on the PCjr with 128k.

PD0033

(Double-sided)

TIME AND MONEY is a simple monitoring and planning program for controlling home finances by Dan Marcellus.

The program will work with any IBM personal computer, including PCjr, if it has 128K of memory, and at least one double-sided floppy disk. It is compatible with DOS 1.1, 2.0, or 2.1. It will work equally well in color or black and white. A USER-SUPPORTED PROGRAM. (from the Fort Worth IBM-PC User Group.)

PD0034

(Double-sided)

PCNEWS article database done like LETUS A-B-C for the club newsletter. This is Carrington Dixon's idea and work. Thanks a lot!!!

ASYNCR.ASM, IOCTL.ASM and TERM.C are from the bulletin board run by "Computer Language Magazine". They are part of an article in the March 1985 issue of that magazine on MS-DOS device drivers. IOCTL.A is a modification of IOCTL.ASM to meet the requirements of the assembler that comes with the DeSmet C compiler; ASYNCR was assembled with IBM's MASM Version 2.0. As it exists, all of this does NOT add up to a working terminal program. The author, Mike Higgins, has generously given permission to use the software without restriction. ASYNCR.ASM should

be of interest to anyone wishing to write a DOS device driver for whatever purpose. (contributed by Carrington Dixon)

SWIFT_LOG from Swift Software of Dallas. Swift Software has contributed a demo version of their computer usage logging program. As well as keeping logs of date and time a person logs on and off and what account he was working on, it will sort and print reports on log data collected. (contributed by Karen Thibodeau)

PD0035

(Double-sided)

SINTERM is a Hewlett Packard-like terminal simulation to a UNIX (tm) system by Jim and Eric Holtman. The complete source in Pascal, Assembler, and C is included.

PD0036

(Double-sided)

SMALL-C:PC is a compiler that runs under PC-DOS on the IBM Personal Computer (PC). The source input to the compiler is written in small-c, a subset of the C programming language. The compiler outputs symbolic assembly language code that can be assembled on the PC using the ASM or MASM assembler programs available from IBM.

LT0007

(Double-sided)

LETUS A-B-C database for the third quarter of 1984 covering PC Magazine, Byte, PC Tech Journal, and PC World.

LT0008

(Double-sided)

LETUS A-B-C database for the third quarter of 1984 covering Business Computing, Softalk, PCjr, PC Week, Peanut, PC Products, and PCjr World.

EX0015

(Double sided)

The IBM EXCHANGE diskette #15, dated March, 1985 has not been received at press time. It should be ready at the meeting, check for it there.

DEFINITIONS

Definition of terms used in the club library:

DOM (Disk Of the Month) - the program(s) I think will be of most interest and use to the members. ➤

DISK OF THE MONTH (continued)

PD (Public Domain) - contains public domain, FREEMWARE, SHAREWARE, and other user supported programs that are of interest and use to members.

LT (LeTus) - is the magazine article database for use with PC-FILE III.

EX (EXchange) - Newsletters, sample programs, demos, and announcements from IBM User Group Support. This diskette is mailed to the club each month.

DISCLAIMER

We copy these programs as a service to the club and the members of the club. We try to test all programs, but we DO NOT WARRANT THE PROGRAMS IN ANY WAY. YOU MUST DECIDE IF A PROGRAM IS SUITABLE FOR YOUR SYSTEM. If you ask, we will tell you what we know about any program, but the final decision to buy and/or use these programs is yours. We will gladly and without question exchange an unreadable diskette for one of the same program.

EXCHANGE

All members of the club are encouraged to contribute copies of public domain programs to the club library.

For each new diskette of software contributed, you may select any diskette in the club library in exchange. The contributions will be reviewed before credit is issued at the next meeting.

MAIL ORDERS

As long as the members use it, I will fill mail orders on the following basis. All orders must have payment enclosed and addressed to: Doug Windham, DOM Chairman, PO Box 475205, Garland, Tx, 75047. Postage and handling must be enclosed per the following: \$.50 per diskette ordered with a \$2.00 MINIMUM charge, and \$1.00 postage for each catalog.

DISK DETAILS

Price: \$6.00 (except 2-diskette packs \$8)

Catalog Diskette (has README file from each diskette in club library): \$3.00 or return catalog diskette with \$

Available at the meeting, before and after the general meetings. Media: DSDD 5 1/4" diskettes formatted without DOS (320k). Public domain software only, standard full disclaimers. Call disk of the month chairman Doug Windham at 278-5321 any time (have answering machine) to contribute new programs for future Disk of the Month issues. All back issues are be available at the meeting and by mail order (see note above).



PAWS FOR GREAT DEALS



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Oberon Omni-Scan will read a page of text into your own word processor. The ideal solution to multiple computer systems that need to share the same files. Print them out on one computer and read them into the other. Connects to computer with serial interface.

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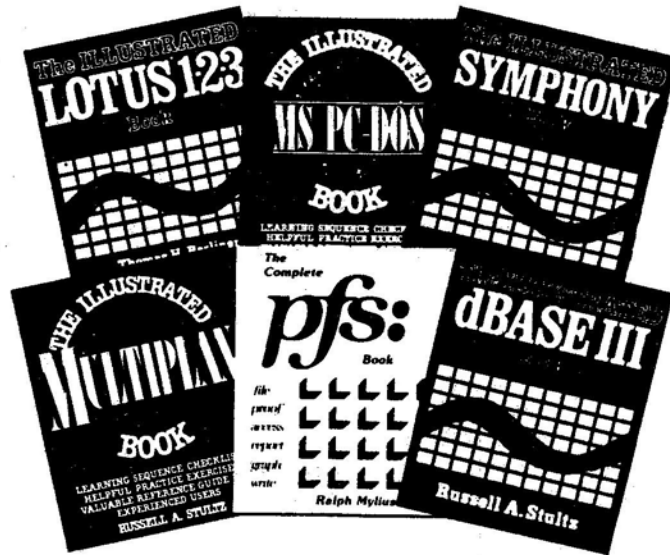
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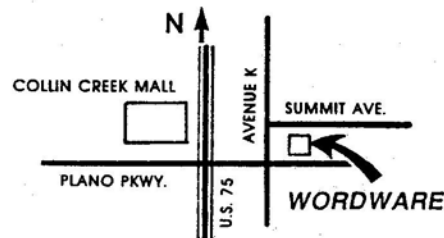
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Communications Packages \$35 or Less

by Ken Goosens

This article is a reprint from the January, 1985 edition of Capitol PC Monitor, the newsletter by the IBM-PC Users' Group in Washington, DC.

Summary. An adequate communications package must work on a Hayes Compatible modem, store directories of numbers, dial until connected, allow text files to be sent and incoming transmissions to be captured to disk, support up and down load of non-text files using XMODEM, and allow log ons to be automated. The three best packages that cost no more than \$35 are PC-TALK, PC-DIAL, and QMODEM. All are highly satisfactory but QMODEM is the easiest to use, PC-TALK is the most powerful, and PC-DIAL is the best for automating communication. More expensive programs can be justified if you need terminal emulation, hosting, programmable communication, unattended transmission, extremely reliable error checking, special protocols, or if you need to run programs on a remote computer.

Don't Buy More Than You Really Need

Anyone needing communications software should check low cost programs first. Since the price can't be beaten, the only question is whether the performance is adequate for your needs.

Three of the best low cost communications programs for the IBM-PC and compatibles are PC-TALK, PC-DIAL, and QMODEM. PC-TALK and PC-DIAL are written in Basic, and QMODEM in Turbo Pascal, and all include assembler subroutines. These are marketed as freeware, which means that people are encouraged to give away the program at no charge to others. The advantage to you is that you don't have to pay before you try the program. Persons using the package are asked to send a voluntary contribution to the author. Most user groups including the Capital PC Club, distribute them on bulletin boards or disks.

What's the Catch?

There is no catch. The programs work well. They are easy to use. They come with documentation. There are no hidden charges. On every standard-documentation, ease of use, learnability, error free performance, capabilities, and even support-these packages rival good commercial software.

Low cost packages are not feature-poor cousins of more expensive ones. Some capabilities were first developed on the freeware communications packages! Freeware packages made XMODEM the standard, and commercial packages were forced to add XMODEM by the marketplace. Most commercial packages had a "proprietary" error checking protocol instead. Support for ANSI commands allow the host to control the screen of the caller, and music (as supported by Basic play command), were pioneered by freeware packages, and have yet to be incorporated into any commercial packages. And only freeware versions allow 300 baud modems to run at 450.

Total novices may fear that they need help getting started. Does support from the vendor justify paying for a package? The best help in getting started comes not from commercial firms or retail stores, but from the user groups and more experienced individuals. And there the low cost software is the most widely used, so there is actually more and better help available for the low cost packages than the commercial ones! And PC-TALK and QMODEM are among the easiest to learn of all communications packages.

If the low cost packages are so good, why would anybody pay \$100 and more for a commercial package? Most shouldn't. The low cost programs set a standard of performance which a commercial package will have to beat in order to be worthwhile. The only good reason for paying more is that you need additional capabilities which only the commercial programs have.

The Basic Capabilities

Any communications package that does the following will be fully adequate for most persons' needs.

0 Runs with a reliable, standard modem

The Hayes Smartmodem is the market standard for the IBM-PC, so you should have a special reason to get anything besides a Hayes compatible modem. But beware: many so called Hayes compatible modems will not run all software that runs on a Hayes.

0 Store Telephone numbers and communications profiles for them.

This is the minimal "data base" a communications program needs. You don't want to have to interactively reset baud rate and other parameters every time you call a number. ►

\$35 or Less

(continued)

- O Two communications parameter settings: even parity, 7 data bits, 1 stop bit; and no parity, 8 data bits, 1 stop bit.
- O Dial a specified number; dial a number from a stored directory; dial until connected.

The only way you will be able to get onto busy host systems is to keep dialing until you connect, which should set off an audible alarm so that you don't have to sit in front of the computer just watching it repeatedly dial a busy number.

- O Capture incoming transmission in a file; send text (ASCII) files.
- O Send and receive files using the XMODEM protocol.

What you really need is a way to transmit files that aren't text, like compiled games, and to be able to check for transmission errors on noisy lines with automatic re-transmission when errors are detected. XMODEM is the only standard error checking protocol widely supported on microcomputers.

- O Automate procedures for logging on to host computers.

You usually have to go through a "log in" procedure to get onto a host computer. Automating such procedures saves time and typing errors.

A Comparison

The following is a point by point comparison of PC-TALK, PC-DIAL, and QMODEM. QMODEM is the same as PC-TALK except where noted.

1. Cost (voluntary contribution)

PC-TALK. \$35
 PC-DIAL. \$25
 QMODEM. \$10

2. Source Code Distributed?

PC-TALK. Yes.
 PC-DIAL. No.
 QMODEM. No.



3. Modem Support.

PC-TALK. Programmed for Hayes. Dial command can be reset for other modems.

PC-DIAL. Not set for any modem. Works with any modem, but you have to know your modem commands.

QMODEM. Supports Hayes, Qubie, Racal-Vadic. Select in configuration.

4. How it stores directories.

PC-TALK. Keeps data base of up to 60 numbers. Stores profile for each.

PC-DIAL. User has to store PC-DIAL commands and modem commands in an external file which is created and edited outside of PC-DIAL. The numbers you can dial are limited only by storage space on a disk.

Q-MODEM. Stores up to 200 numbers. Same as PC-TALK except that it does not support stripping (removing/substituting characters) or pacing (controlling transmission speed).

5. How do you dial?

PC-TALK. Alt-D accesses the dialing directory. Select M for manual, or a number by its order in the list (1-60).

PC-DIAL. User issues modem command (e.g. ATDT537-7475 for Hayes). By embedding a dialing command in a file you can select the number to dial by a file name.

QMODEM. Same as PC-TALK, except that must select "D" for "DIAL" after Alt-D.

6. Repeat dial until connected.

PC-TALK. After a number dialed and not answered, issue Alt-Q to redial until connected. Time between redial can be set.

PC-DIAL. Has special repeat commands in which you embed dial command. Redials every minute.

QMODEM. Same as PC-TALK, except I could not get this feature to work with version 2.80 that I tested. Erroneously detected connection. Almost certainly this will be fixed by the time you read this. ▶

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7. Communications parameters.

PC-TALK. Parity even, odd, none, mark, space. Select number of data and stop bits. Alt-F to set default profile. Prompted thru options.

PC-DIAL. Same capabilities. Store profile in external file. F3 to temporarily set default for a session.

8. Capture and send.

PC-TALK. Press PgDn or Alt-R to capture incoming data. PgUp or Alt-T to send. Prompts for filename.

PC-DIAL. F1 to receive. F7 to send. F9 to send one line at a time (each F9 sends next line). Prompts for filename

9. Error checking file transmission.

PC-TALK. Append "=x" to filename in capture/send to get XMODEM.

PC-DIAL. Same.

QMODEM. Specify protocol from menu option before giving filename.

10. Log on procedures.

PC-TALK. Can assign strings to functions keys.

PC-DIAL. Store commands and responds (entire session) in external file, and send line at a time.

Three Versions of PC-TALK

The original vendor of PC-TALK put out an official release called PC-TALK III. But this release has failed to keep pace with the many enhancements created by users, so that upgrades to PC-TALK are now effectively being distributed and maintained by the user community. There are two different versions; one stemming from Drom Stickle, and the other known as BBS-TALK, or PCTxxx where xxx is a version number. PCT501 is the one that I regularly use and recommend. Though by the time you read this newer releases will probably exist.

The new versions of PC-TALK have some very nice enhancements, such as the ability to transmit an entire line rather than each character as it is typed. 3101

emulation, support for subdirectories, a hang up command and support for music and ANSI color. The leading edge for communications software is the public community.

A Comparison

All three packages - PC-TALK, PC-DIAL, and QMODEM - satisfy the basic criteria of adequacy and are roughly functionally equivalent. All have further capabilities not discussed here, and each has some distinct advantages. Only PC-TALK supports "pacing" a transmission by a prompt sent by the host; only PC-DIAL supports line at a time transmission of a file; and only QMODEM supports pop up menus that overlay part of a screen and disappear when answered.

The major differences are more in how they do it than what they do. PC-TALK is self-contained and has built-in procedures for reading and storing associated information in files. PC-DIAL, however, requires a stand-alone editor to create such files. PC-DIAL is the only package that works with any modem. PC-TALK and QMODEM have the advantage that the user need not know anything about the internal modem commands (e.g. that touch tone dialing is ATDT), but PC-DIAL requires the user to know how to instruct the modem. PC-TALK and QMODEM use the special keys (chiefly the Alt key) to issue commands, whereas PC-DIAL uses the function keys. Help in PC-TALK is obtained by pressing HOME, which displays all the commands, whereas PC-DIAL uses a bottom status line to display what the function keys do.

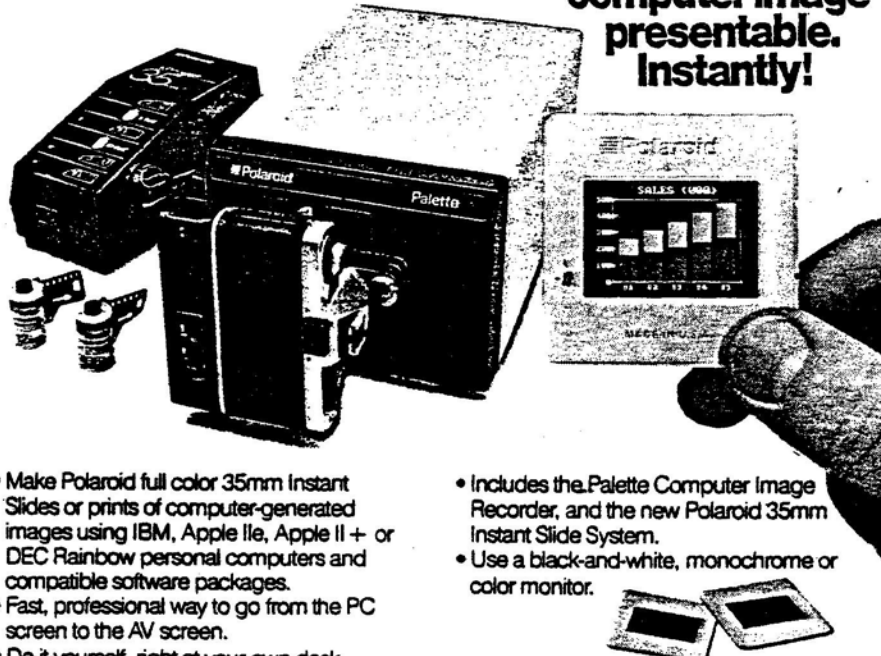
PC-DIAL has one major feature not in the others. You can "send a file" a line at a time. PC-DIAL interprets whatever is in the file, looking for a backslash (\) to signal commands to it, and sending the rest to the modem just as if these lines were entered from the keyboard. Only one non-command to PC-DIAL is sent at a time, in effect allowing the user to manually pace transmission by pressing F9 to get the next line. By turning on "Peek" you can see in advance what line is next in the file. One can therefore script out sessions on a host and mix in commands with responses to the host. This makes PC-DIAL much better for automating communications than the others, which offer only the ability to attach strings to keystrokes, which are difficult to remember.

QMODEM implements the functions in PC-TALK III, but the only additional feature it adds is Alt-H for hanging up. QMODEM does leave out the ability to "strip" and "pace", which are seldom needed but are essential when working on some mainframes. The newer, user supported versions of PC-TALK are therefore distinctly more powerful than QMODEM. QMODEM, however, is even friendlier and easier to learn and use than PC-TALK. QMODEM does not scroll

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away its commands like PC-TALK. It removes messages from the screen that are no longer needed rather than leaving a confusing clutter. It uses more prompts than PC-TALK (e.g. it prompts for protocol). It explains options. For example, when setting defaults, it gives a text explanation of what each default means, and displays what each number code for colors represents.

PC-TALK and QMODEM are easier to learn than PC-DIAL because they transparently manage the modem and associated files without having to use an external editor. About the only modem commands ever used, however, are dial (ATDT), hang up (ATH), and initialize (ATZ). Once you understand these and how to use an editor to create the profile and script files, PC-DIAL can be faster and easier to use.

What You Don't Get

Low cost communications packages show that you can get a lot more than you pay for, but they don't give you everything you might need. The following types of capabilities are generally absent or weak.

O Terminal Emulation.

Most large computers, such as Data General, DEC, and IBM, assume that a particular type of terminal is attached. They expect certain keys to be available on the keyboard, and certain commands to control the screen (what clears it, what positions the cursor at line 10, column 5, etc.). The problem is that different brands of terminals generally have different keyboards and screen commands. The only way the PC can properly run on such machines is to "emulate" the assumed terminal, which basically requires it to convert terminal commands and keystrokes to their equivalents for each computer.

O Hosting.

PC-TALK and PC-DIAL have no special capabilities for answering the phone and turning your computer into a host for others. Nor will they support allowing people to remotely run jobs on the host computer.

O Completely Automated Log On.

This saves time and also makes it easy for novices to use communications. In the extreme case, the user need only boot the disk to get onto a host computer. Or the user can select a host by typing in a single word, like CYBER, SOURCE, DG, DOWNJONES. None of the three packages

can be invoked with parameters to specify what they are to do, and none allows completely unattended log on. Look for a package that can wait between transmissions, either for a fixed amount of time or for a specified string. This simulates the way people log on. When you see the prompt for user ID, you answer it. After the prompt for password, you type that in, and so on. The best solution is to have built in programming commands. It has to be flexible enough to handle cases where the prompts may not always be the same and the time between them varies.

O Unattended communication.

It should be possible to automate entire communication sessions between machines. For example, you may want to put into production the transmission of data from regional offices to a home office.

O Extremely Reliable Transmission.

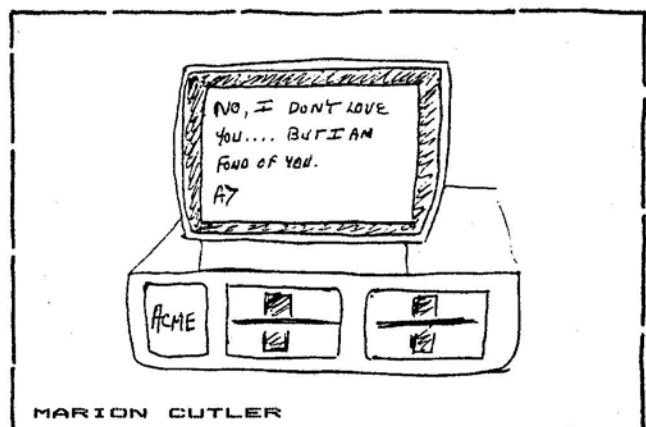
XMODEM gives you 99.6% reliability. But when transmitting financial data, changing one digit could mean billions of dollars. Then you must have higher reliability.

O Special Protocols.

If you are transmitting data to larger computers and need error checking for high reliability, you must match whatever protocol the larger machine supports. Don't expect them to support XMODEM, which originated on 8 bit microcomputers.

O Remote forms processing and data base applications.

Would you like your communications package to allow other persons to dial into it, be presented with forms to fill out, and retrieve requested information from a data base based on requests? Not these packages. ►



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What's Better?

Crosstalk and Telios are two very good communication packages that are in the next tier of capabilities and are modestly priced. Crosstalk is especially good at automating communications and interfacing with another computer running crosstalk. The only software that integrates calling, hosting, and data base management is MIST+, which is a communications programming language. Especially strong in terminal emulation is the package Softerm.

Recommendations

If you are a novice to computers and communications, don't spend a lot of money on communications software. Even if your needs eventually outpace these capabilities

of low cost software, you still will have inexpensively learned how to use communications. QMODEM is outstanding for ease of use. PC-TALK has power beyond the basics while still being easy to use, will remain the best supported and most enhanced communications package, and can be custom modified for special needs. PC-DIAL requires more understanding of communications and is harder to learn. It's major advantage is that it is distinctly better for scripting out communications sessions and does introduce users to the concept of automating communications. But to automate many applications a package will be necessary that has a more powerful communications programming language.

What's best is what's best for you, and you know your own needs. Put together your own requirements. Then find out what is available on the market, and evaluate them yourself.

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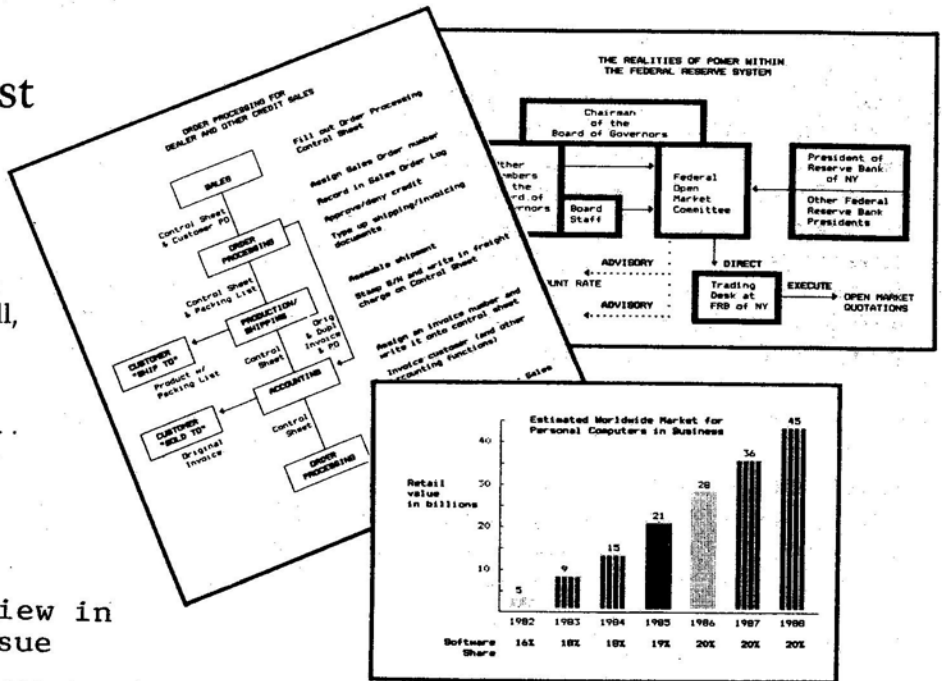
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- Aug.-Utilities (WS custom files, SGED editor, etc)
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- Nov.-747,SPOOLER,TRUCKER,MAP(States&Capitals)
- 1984
- Jan.-Sample PASCAL source programs
- Feb.-1Rinky-Dingy,Math Tutor,Hobbit game,Worldmap
- Mar.-Games (HOPPER,MONOPOLY,STARLANE,& 12 others)
- May -PC-ENTRY, NEWKEYS, Flowchart with LOTUS 1-2-3
- June-IBM UG Newsletter (First issue of EXCHANGE)
- Aug.-PC Personal Graphics, PC-TOUCH, & BAT (EBL)
- Sep.-Galaxy Trek,UTIL&Corewar
- Nov.-Games(X-WING,SEAWOLF,KANGAROO,RACECAR,&others)
- Dec.-Whizzard BASIC Speedup
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- Jan.-BASIC Professor (BASIC tutorial),Word processing for kids,HELP for DOS 2.0,& DIGIDRAW
- Feb.-PC-FILE.III Ver. 3.0 Data Management System
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- PD #32-Generology on Display V3.0 (360k)
- PD #33-TIME AND MONEY (Home Finances Program)
- PD #34-PCNEWS xref,ASYNC.ASM,IOCTL.ASM,& SWIFT LOG
- PD #35-SIMTERM (terminal simulator to UNIX (tm))
- PD #36-SMALL-C:PC (C compiler that generates .ASM)

LETUS A-B-C (Mag article database - use w/PC-FILE III)

- LT #1-1982 - Softalk, PC, PC Age, Byte
- LT #2-1983 - Softalk, PC (Jan-Jun), PC-Age
- LT #3-1983 - PC World,PC(July-Dec),PC Tech Journal, & Byte
- LT #4-1984 - 1st Qtr-Byte,PC Age,PC Magazine,PCjr, PCjr World PC Tech Journal,& Softalk
- LT #5-1984 - 2nd Qtr-PC Magazine,PC World,PC Tech Journal,and Byte
- LT #6-1984 - 2nd Qtr-PC Age,Softalk,PCjr,PCjr World, Peanut, and PC Products
- LT #7-1984 - 3rd Qtr-PC Magazine,PC World,PC Tech Journal, and Byte
- LT #8-1984 - 3rd Qtr-Business Computing,Softalk, PCjr, PCjr World, Peanut, PC WEEK, and PC Products

EXCHANGE Newsletters from IBM User Group Support

- EX #2 -EXCHANGE April 1984
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- EX #4 -EXCHANGE June 1984
- EX #5 -EXCHANGE July 1984
- EX #6 -EXCHANGE Aug. 1984
- EX #7 -EXCHANGE Aug. Part 2 1984
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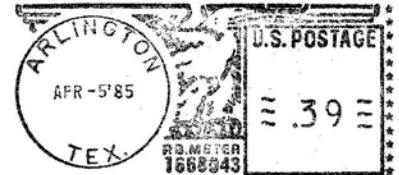
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