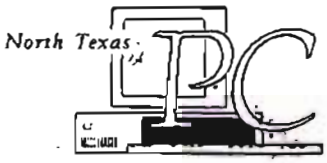
6.10

Price $2.00



NEWS

North Texas PC Users Group

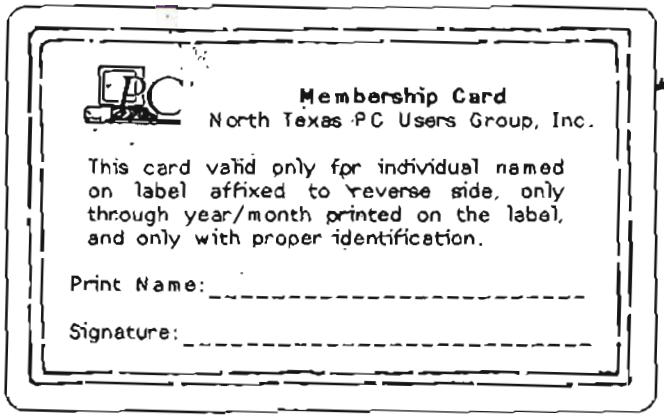
6.10

October 1987

MEMBERSHIP CARD

This is your membership card in North Texas PC Users Group. You will need it for identification at Disk of the Month sales, group purchases and other activities. This card is valid only for you, the person named on label on reverse side. It is valid through expiration date shown on the label.

When trimmed, the card will fit the holders previously furnished for Infomart cards which are no longer required. Wear your membership card instead. Additional holders will be available at a nominal charge.



Trim card to wallet size.

Meetings & Times...

Saturday, 10 October 1987

9:00 AM to 9:45 AM

AUDITORIUM *** INDESYS ***

INDESYS, Inc. of Sunnyvale, CA markets the Personal Information Network. Consisting of special receiver hardware and transmission services, PIN uses FM SCA technology to deliver confidential, time sensitive information to each receiver site. Companies needing to transmit any type of information to multiple locations are candidates for PIN.

10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

AUDITORIUM *** TANDY CORPORATION ***

Marvin Woods of Tandy will give us an overview of that company's new pc-compatible product line as well as some insight into Tandy's marketing strategy. The Tandy showroom at Infomart will be open for hands-on demonstrations.

Note

SIG Meeting times are being changed this month. Schedule was not available at press time. Check the Bulletin Board, STARTEXT or call your SIG Leader to get the latest information.

October 10 — Charles Kroboth, Program Director

9:00 AM to 9:45 AM

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Prez Sez...

Mail Order Problems.

In early August, a company by the name of COMPUSYSTEMS placed advertisements in several of the leading microcomputer publications. The company listed very good prices on leading software packages and hardware. They accepted only personal and company checks and required a wait of 10 days for the checks to clear. The company was a fraud.

They never had any software or hardware to ship. After collecting several weeks worth of checks (probably over $200,000), they disappeared. The police are still trying to find them.

I know a lot of you order things by mail. Try to do your business with a company that has been around for a while. Remember, if the price is too good to be true, it probably isn't true.

Membership Director.

Bob Russell has been our membership director for several years. Bob is currently completing a computer project for his employer which will require him to spend several months in the Washington, D.C. area after the first of the year.

As the project deadline grows near and the number of hours at work grows long, Bob has requested a leave of absence from his job as Membership Director. Sometime in October, Rob Kolodner will take over the membership duties from Bob. At the same time, we will be converting from the PC FILE database to the PARADOX database. The membership database is being used for more and more user group functions. For example, Reagan Andrews uses it to prepare the renewal letters and Tom Prickett uses it to validate requests for members to use the BBS.

PC FILE has served us well in the past but we have been looking for a stronger package since the first of the year. Jim Graham, past president of the NTPCUG, was able to get ANSA to donate a copy of PARADOX to the users group.

Thank you Jim and thank you ANSA. I'm sure we'll put it to good use.

Brochure and Membership Cards.

Work is proceeding slowly on a brochure that describes our group and membership cards. I had hoped to have this all done by September but we are proceeding cautiously. The layout of the brochure is currently out for bids and we don't want to proceed with the membership cards until we have finalized the layout of the brochure.

Available Rooms.

We are starting to run out of space at INFOMART. I already hear that several SIGS may be meeting in the 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. slot by October. We have to be out of the building by 5:00 p.m.

Would you be agreeable to having some of the SIGs meet on a week night? Most of the other large user groups work this way. Drop me a note via the user group post office box if you have an opinion one way or the other.

Nominations.

Reagan Andrews, our President-Elect, will be heading up the nominating committee. He and the committee will be looking for candidates for President-Elect and the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors helps the President determine the general direction of the User Group. The President- Elect gets a whole year of training before taking the reins for a year. Think of that, a whole year of free training!

If the nominating committee asks you to run for an office, please say yes.

Jim

North Texas Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

P.O. Box 780066, Dallas, TX 75378-0066

Phone (214)746-4699 for recorded information about the User Group and meeting dates.

The North Texas PC Users Group, Inc., is a non-profit, independent group, not associated with IBM or any other Corporation. Membership is open to owners and others interested in exchanging ideas, information, hardware, predictions, and other items related to IBM Personal and compatible computers. To join the Group, complete the application blank printed elsewhere in this issue, and send it with $24 membership dues to the Membership Director whose address is shown at the bottom of this page. A subscription to the newsletter is included with each membership.

The Group meets once each month, usually on the second Saturday. See cover for date, time and place of the next User Group meeting.

Officials

President – Jim Hoisington (214)416-3101 h
President-Elect –
Reagan Andrews, Ph.D. (214)828-0699 h
Program Chair. – Charles Kroboth (214)746-5335 w
Treasurer – Joe Brophy (214)891-8187 w
Secretary – David McGehee (214)681-0202 h
Membership Dir. – Robert Kolodner (214)821-6015
Disk of the Month – Kathryn Crawford
Group Purchases – Tai Tsou
Group Statistician – Connie Testa

Special Interest Groups

SIG Coord. – Phil Chamberlain (214)243-5034 h
APL – Jim Fiegenshue (214)539-9281 h
Artificial Intel. Arnie Strand (214)824-7894 h
Astrometry – Arlin Collins (214)351-5137 h
Assembler – Neil Bennett, Ph.D. (214)517-6854 h
BASIC Applic – Ross Carter (214)238-8638 h
Beginners – Gordon Baskett (214)247-1873 h
Business Applic. Bruce Schubert (214)991-5967 w
Enable – Jack Lundberg(214)596-8160 h
– Susan Watts (214)416-0077 h
C Language – Sid Nolte, Ph.D. (214)233-6178 h
Communications – Fred Williams (214)492-1315 w
DAC Software – Mike Macaulay
Databases – Chris Morgan (214)746-5335 w
– Bob Monoghan (429)3245 w
DBase – David Hayden (214)380-8172 h
DOS – Jim Hoisington (214)416-3101 h
– Reagan Andrews, Ph.D. (214)828-0699 h
Genealogy – Minnie Champ (214)341-6507 h
Graphics – Mike Durbin (214)271-8779 h
Hdw Solutions – David McGehee (214)681-0202 h
LOTUS – Peyton Weaver (214)462-0552 h
– Mark Gruner (214)373-3147 h
Pers Fin Plan – Michael Stoddard (214)363-4200 w
Programmers – Neil Bennett, Ph.D. (214)517-6854 h
Science/Engr. – Sam Leven (214)991-7642
– David Lamb (214)931-3068 h
Stock Market – Cliff Murphy (214)279-7973
Turbo Pascal – Warren Ferguson (214)692-2506 w

BULLETIN BOARD SYSTEM – 461-0425 (Metro)
461-0506 (Metro)
SYSOP: – Tom Prickett (voice) (214)690-9087
Asst. SYSOP. – Maggie Moomie
Technical Advisors: Fred Williams
Pete Testa

Address Changes, etc...
Payment of dues, address changes, and inquiries about membership should be directed to
NTPCUG Membership Director
6015 Belmont Ave.
Dallas, Texas 75206

(Check newsletter mailing label for your renewal date..)

Modem Monsters vs. Techno-Babble In The Telecommunications Wars

Second in a Communications Series

Reagan Andrews, Ph.D.

This title is worse, if possible, than the last one -- and begins to sound like a cross between a Japanese, B-grade monster film and an Italian historical epic where the Roman gladiators wear wrist watches. Oh well...

Initial article in this series described how one unwitting, novice PC user quickly became ensnarled and addicted to Telecommunicating via the PC. If the reader chooses to ignore this warning, and follow the same sad path, then the remaining pieces may assist in eliminating some of the potential pain in Telecommunications.

First, Selecting a Modem

First step in starting the process is acquisition of a modem with which to access other computers via telephone lines.

Modem? Another piece of expensive hardware for the computer? Yes, and no. They used to be very expensive. Now, they're not so expensive. Modems convert analog signals into digital signals, and vice versa. Telephone lines (mostly at present) work with analog signals, similar to voice or music. A modem (modulator-demodulator) converts the computer's digital data stream into modulated analog signals which are transmitted via telephone line to another modem which demodulates the analog signal and converts it back into a digital data stream.

(That's about as technical as I want to be here. For a much better explanation, and an excellent product comparison - review, see "PC Magazine's" May 12, 1987 issue.)

Users Can't Always Be Choosers

Although there are many types of modems available this choice is sometimes dictated by the PC itself. Laptop PC users may have little or no choice in this matter. Often there is only one available modem for their machine and they will have to live with that choice. Early IBM laptop modems fell into this group.

Owners of machines that are "non-standard" will have to consult their dealer or NTPCUG members with similar machines for assistance/advice in modem selection.

If Users Can Choose, Selection Is Huge

There are many, many modems available to the PC user. Before making a purchase decision, the user needs some criteria to assist in breaking-down the selection into usable categories from which he or she can select to suit communications needs.

Modems for use with PC's can usually be classed in the following categories:

SPEED Modems range from 300 Baud to 9600 Baud in the PC range. These usually are available in steps of 300, 1200, 2400 and 9600 Baud capabilities.

MECHANICAL A second, mechanical, classification is "internal", i.e., mounted inside the computer case, vs. "external", or mounted outside the computer case, modem types.

FUNCTIONALITY Modems are also classified by functional capabilities, ranging from completely manual to fully automatic operation.

Narrowing the Choices

Right from the start, let's discard two entire groups of modems. We'll also advise against a third group of modems for non-expert PC users.

First of these are the Acoustic couplers, usually 300 baud. There are many of these still around at junk sales, flea markets, etc. Almost all of these depend on use of a "standard" headset shoved into soft rubber or foam cups built into the modem itself. These modems require NO direct connection with the phone lines, but do present significant problems for the user with "non-standard" telephone handsets (most of us now), and are susceptible to external room noise above 300 Baud.

Second, eliminate ANY 300 Baud modems from consideration. These are quite servicable, but many of the more popular BBS's are BANNING 300 Baud operation entirely from access. This is partially due to the 300-Baud modems' very slow operation which ties-up BBS lines for longer periods, and also due to trouble with adolescent (and younger) users' misuse of BBS's with their inexpensive 300 Baud units.

"Exotics" Not Good Choice for Beginners

There is a third group of modems, infrequently seen, that shouldn't be considered by novice or beginning users. These are any modems that don't use the standard Hayes commands or standard RS 232 connection to the PC.

Usually, these are special-purpose modems, dedicated to a particular use such as operating a TELETYPE machine, printer and/or other commercial and industrial applications. These are often found at very attractive prices at surplus sales, fleamarkets and other sources, but frequently pose significant technical and programming barriers to everyday use with PC's.

These may otherwise be very good modems, adapting commonly available software to them is often a very complicated, time-consuming task and frequently beyond most users' skill. (Many modems that are advertised and sold as "fully Hayes compatible" could fit this category as well.)

A Closer Look at Speed

Modems are classed by speed (roughly how quickly they can transmit or receive data) measured in "Baud" and ranging from "slow" 300 Baud units to very fast 9600 Baud modems. (To get some idea of transmission speed ►

divide Baud by 10 and that's about the number of Bytes per second the modem will pass. Cost currently follows approximately the same formula substituting $ for Bytes.)

Most appropriate choices will fall into either 1200 Baud or 2400 Baud categories. Although 2400 Baud modems are quite reasonably priced now, the business standard is still 1200 Baud. All 2400 Baud modems for PC use can "drop back" to 1200 or 300 Baud, so don't let this "standard" deter getting a 2400 Baud modem if you wish. (This is NOT always true of non-PC, industrial or special-purpose modems, though.)

Really fast, 9600 Baud, modems are available, but NO standards have been generally adopted at this time. Also, present telephone equipment and line parameters may not allow consistent operation at the higher speed settings. Finally, these speed demons are pretty close to the $1000 range now which might be difficult to justify for the average user.

Internal vs. External Modems

Most users will have a choice between internal (inside the computer case) and external (outside the computer case) modem types. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Internal modems plug into an expansion slot on the motherboard and draw their power from the computer power

supply. They attach directly to the telephone line and eliminate the RS-232 cable between computer and modem. Internal units are also generally $50 - 100 less expensive than their external counterparts.

Some of these "advantages" pose problems themselves, though. Early IBM-PC's may not be able to supply sufficient current for the internal model plus additional memory, hard disk, etc. The internal modems demand a slot on the motherboard for a single application. They also generate substantial heat which may be an important factor. Some of the internal modems also demand the COM1: serial-port address which may conflict with other software/hardware already in use.

External modems are usually much more flexible in this regard. If the two "standard" serial ports (COM1: and COM2:) allowed by MS/PC-DOS are already "occupied", perhaps by a serial printer and a mouse, external switching of one of the COM lines is easily done to allow modem operation.

Also, if changes are required in modem configuration switches, it's usually easier to change them on an external modem. However, external modems demand desktop space and a RS-232 cable between the modem and the computer. Many externals have separate power supplies that are not switched and will require either unplugging or switching.

What Functions are needed?

Early modems for PC's were usually simple, manually-switched, originate-only models that were "acoustically-coupled" to the telephone line. Although very inexpensive, originate-only (you can call someone else, but they can't call you easily) modems are still available, prices for auto-dial, auto-answer modems have dropped significantly in the last year. Anything less really isn't worth purchase now.

Top of the line, and most common now, are the sophisticated auto-dialing, auto-answering modems controlled by microprocessors. Hayes and US Robotics probably are the best-known names in the area and the Hayes "AT" command set has become the de facto industry standard for automatic modem

The potential purchaser should get assurance that the modem supports the FULL Hayes command set, preferably with extended result codes which will be explained separately. In this area, the purchaser should ask to see the manual for the prospective modem and assure that the "basic" Hayes AT commands are used for initiation of calls and answering. If the vendor isn't willing to show the manual, look elsewhere. Lots of people sell full-compatible modems now.

Built-in error correction functions such as MNC, etc. protocols, while essential for 9600 Baud units and some commercial applications, may not be as useful for 1200 and 2400 Baud modems. These usually work ONLY if the modem at the other end of the line also supports the protocol.

Other Considerations in Modem Selection

Noise -- Telephone lines in the D-FW area are highly variable in terms of typical line noise levels. Users in some exchanges may discover that line-noise rejection is the most important criteria for their modem selection.

"PC Magazine's" article mentioned earlier highlighted modem selection and examined some problem areas associated with using 2400 Baud modems (mostly poor line-noise rejection) regardless of cost. One important fact was that several of the inexpensive 2400 Baud modems often operate better at 1200 Baud than the expensive 1200 Baud units!

Telephone Equipment Limitations -- Users in some buildings and offices with "older" switching equipment may also discover that they cannot operate above 1200 Baud (sometimes 300 Baud) regardless of the modem's specifications. The limiting factor here is the telephone equipment installed, not the modem's capabilities or line noise.

Making Choices Based on Real Needs

Unlike memory, where there's never too much, modem selection should be tailored to the users real needs. Human factors should be heavily weighted here. Most of us, regardless of age, really can't read faster than a 1200 Baud transmission rate. Actually, 300 Baud modems transfer ASCII text about as fast as most people read.

If the modem is to be used for accessing on-line data to be read by the user, faster modems' speed is probably ►

wasted. Also, if the modem is primarily to tap into a net that only operates at 1200 Baud and there is no problem with line noise, the extra speed of a 2400 Baud modem is equally wasted. Cost differential here is about 2:1, and if modem prices continue to fall, will be meaningless, since many makers will discontinue 1200 Baud production in favor of higher profit margins.

Speed May Be Economical

Exceptions to the above do exist. Consider the long-distance toll charges in accessing an on-line database, and

remember that most communications software allows "logging" or ASCII capture. This allows working the database at high speed, 2400 Baud, and reading the log file at leisure later.

Of course, the database vendor may have differential rates, i.e., charge more per hour of "connect" time for high-speed operation than low-speed operation. This may offset or negate the savings allowed by using high-speed data transfer. (This tends to be the situation where non- professional databases or communications services are involved. Professional database utilities typically don't make such a distinction.)

Users in a time-restricted environment, such as that imposed by most BBS Sysops, will probably want the additional speed of the 2400 Baud modems, and may even consider a 9600 Baud unit if price trends follow those seen in 2400 and 1200 Baud units in the past. Program files available on BBS's have followed the trend established in the commercial markets and have "grown" considerably, thus making high-speed data transfer more desirable if the user wishes to sample current FreeWare and Shareware applications programs on local BBS's.

A Few Tips

We live in the land of rapidly appearing thunderstorms. Some form of protection against lightning-induced high voltage spikes is necessary for long-life modem operation. These can be obtained at reasonable prices from Radio Shack and other sources.

When the user first starts using a modem, there is a temptation to place the phone receiver close at hand. Avoid placing most telephones beside or on top of the computer case. Ringers produce very significant magnetic fields that can affect disks and RAM memory operation with corruption of data on disk or in memory if the telephone rings while the computer is operating. This is sometimes the source of intermittent file errors that are almost impossible to track down and often blamed on other factors.

Reagan

Hayes "AT" Commands — The Real PC Modem Operating Standards

Modern auto-everything modems are controlled by microprocessors that dial telephone numbers, establish mutual Baud rates for communication, answer the phone, and control communications in general. With addition of a few accessory chips, modems can have self-contained dialing directories, error correction protocols and other formerly exotic functions.

At the heart of all these operations are the microprocessor command sets necessary to implement the modems' power. The standard (probably one of the few true standards in the PC world) is the Hayes "AT" command set which is presented below. Importance of this standard cannot be over- emphasized for the PC user. Practically ALL communications software assumes the Hayes command set as default, and many programs allow only minimal deviation from "true Hayes" for the user. The following are taken from the Hayes SMARTMODEM 1200 Quick Reference Card:

COMMANDS

PREFIX

AT		Attention code; precedes all command lines

Command	Parameters	Description
A		Answer call without waiting for a ring
A/		Repeat last command line; replaces AT and no carriage return required
Cn	n = 0,1	n = 0 Transmitter off n = 1 Transmitter on (default)
Ds	s = 0..9 #*TPR,;	Dial a telephone number T = Touch-Tone dial P = Pulse dial R = Reverse mode; call "originate-only" modem
,		, = Pause
;		; = Return to command state after dialing
En	n = 0,1	n = 0 Do not echo characters n = 1 Echo back all characters in command state
Fn	n = 0,1	n = 0 Half-duplex n = 1 Full-duplex (default)
Hn	n = 0..2	n = 0 On hook (hang up) n = 1 Off hook n = 2 Special off hook
In	n = 0,1	n = 0 Request product code n = 1 Request check sum
Mn	n = 0..2	n = 0 Speaker off always n = 1 Speaker on until carrier detected n = 2 Speaker on always
O	None	Return to on-line state
P	None	Pulse dial
Qn	n = 0,1	n = 0 Result codes sent n = 1 Result codes not sent (Quiet)
R	None	Reverse mode; call "originate-only" modem
Sr=n	r = 0..16 n = 0..255	Sets register "r" to value "n"
Sr?	r = 0..16	Reads content of register "r" and sends its value to computer or terminal as a decimal number within a range of 0..255
T	None	Touch-Tone dial
Vn	n = 0,1	n = 0 Result codes transmitted as digits (Non-verbal) n = 1 Result codes transmitted as words (verbal)
Xn	n = 0,1	n = 0 Basic result code set (0-4) n = 1 Extended result code set (0-5)
Z	None	Causes a software reset and applies all default values

RESULT CODES

DIGIT CODES	WORD CODES	MEANING
0	OK	Command line executed without errors
1	CONNECT	Carrier detected at 300 or 1200 (basic code set) Carrier detected at 300 bps only (extended code set)
2	RING	Ringing signal detected
3	NO CARRIER	Carrier lost or never heard
4	ERROR	Error in command line
5	CONNECT 1200	Carrier detected at 1200 bps (extended code set)*

* Extended result codes now contain CONNECT 2400 and BUSY codes for many modern 2400 Baud modems with "supersets" of the standard Hayes result code sets. Additional commands are frequently found in the basic Hayes AT command set as well. However, these are the basic commands necessary to proper utilization of most PC communications software without extensive modification or adjustment.

Bulletin Board News

Greetings from the NTPCUG Sysop

One of the computer words that has not yet been transformed into an unintelligible computer mnemonic is the word "communications." I think it is because it is already so descriptive. Going to Webster's dictionary, one definition is "a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior." Substitute "computers" for "individuals", and you pretty much have it.

Another computer word hasn't fared quite so well: The word "protocol" is misunderstood by many people. Again going to Webster's, only one of the four definitions seems even close - "a code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence." Computer communications uses a protocol to describe a particular method for exchanging information. It's not suprising then, that the notion of protocol has become riddled with lots of magic words and flavors: X-MODEM, Y-MODEM, Kermit, sliding windows, and many more.

Communicating with another person requires a certain amount of protocol too. You must first agree on what language you want to speak. It is often decided in advance that communication is to be a two-way conversation or a one-way lecture. We have invented the word "download" for that one.

As the communication proceeds, it helps to have little indications that your message is being received. If the person you are lecturing falls asleep, it tells you that you probably don't need to continue. When people communicate, an occasional nod is way of showing that the message is being received. A puzzled look is a signal to restate the idea.

The message itself may influence the language that is used. I often resort to slang and gestures when the message is simple. When communicating an algorithm or paying a bill, I am much more likely to resort to a more formal system, as a misplaced word or digit can result in a big mistake.

The communication media may also influence the language that is used. True, I almost always use some form of English when I speak, but English is not always appropriate when I'm using graphics, DOS, or Central Expressway. All the languages that I find useful seem to have a few things that they do exceptionally well. For instance, the blinker on a car is the best way I know to communicate that you are about to turn.

So, how does this relate to computer communications? Again, you are required to use the right language for the situation. I will make some analogies which start after we have purchased our modems, have somehow made them operational, have dialed into the club's BBS (bet you've been waiting for the plug), and the modem's are happily screaming at one another in that strange language that they understand.

We are frequently multi-lingual when using computer communications. We communicate to the BBS with letters, words, and names. A rigid protocol is usually enforced, i.e. I must tell it that I want to download before I tell it the file name. If the communication is a message to a person, relatively few rules are required. The computer actually uses a bunch of 1's and 0's that are clumped into a code that is called ASCII. It is not so important that it be perfectly error free, and simple protocol called XON/XOFF is usually sufficient to keep large chunks of the message from being lost. This is a red light/green light way to temporarily halt the data flow in case the receiving computer cannot accept the data as fast as the sending computer can send it. Many people are not aware of the XON/XOFF handshaking.

Neither XON/XOFF or Englisb protocol is appropriate for communicating programs and data files. A little mistake here can go a long way. The protocol needs to be more formal. You need a way of detecting and correcting errors. This is why formal protocols like Kermit or X-MODEM are used. The data is split into fixed sized packets and some data is added which is called a check sum. A check sum is nothing more than adding all the bytes together and tagging the result on the end of the packet. The receiving computer can perform the same calculation, and compare the computed result with the result sent. If there was any difference, a NAK (puzzled look) would be returned, and the packet will be retransmitted until it is received correctly. Kermit and X-MODEM are by far the most common protocols used by personal computers, and our BBS supports both.

However, it is not always appropriate to stop with XON/XOFF, Kermit, and X-MODEM protocols. The media can be important here too. If the telephone lines are noisy (lots of errors), it is more efficient to use small packets. When a failure occurs, less has to be retransmitted. Also, there is a better chance of no errors with a small packet than a large one. If the telephone lines are error free, a large packet is appropriate because there are fewer acknowledgements to wait on from the receiving computer. Some of the more exotic protocols dynamically adjust the packet size based on the number of errors while a file is being transmitted. Still other protocols are being developed for high speed modems.

Another media consideration relates to the marvelous technology that is available today. If you have ever used PC-Pursuit or a similar service that uses local telephone lines at the ends and a satellite in the middle, you will notice a dramatic difference between one-way and two-way communications. For example, when you are talking to our BBS using full duplex, each character you ►

DISK OF THE MONTH – OCTOBER 1987

by Kathryn A. Crawford

Get Organized!

The featured DISK-OF-THE-MONTH for October is MakeMyDay! ver. 2.0, a Time Management System created by Universal Business Concepts, Inc. This is a Shareware product, with the registration fee starting at $35 and a price break for site licenses.

MakeMyDay! can be used for several people as well as by one person. The program has several components:

Appointment Calendar
--Handles individual appointments or repeating appointments
--Can be used on-line, or be printed out as a report

Job Scheduler
--Keeps track of your complete "to do" list
--Breaks down the entries into the categories you assign
--Provides a Work In Progress report for each category

Expense Account Manager
--Keeps track of expenses by categories
--Provides account information broken down by categories

TIME LOG
--Keeps track of the time you've spent on each client or project
--Provides the necessary documentation when you want it

DISKS OF THE MONTH

MakeMyDay! is only one of many disks that will be offered in October. What exactly will be available at the October DOM table depends on the reviewers getting the readme files to the DOM Production Manager before the October deadline. This is a broad hint to reviewers to get the Readme files to the DOM Production Manager. We are toying with the idea of posting the reviewer's name, which disks they have, and how long they have had them. Dirty pool, huh?

Disk of the Month Index

The DOM SUBJECT INDEX appearing in this issue of the newsletter was current as of September 1987. In other words, the disks being sold as DISKS OF THE MONTH at the October meeting do not appear in this index.

The index is a subject guide to the public domain, shareware, and demonstration software in the North Texas PC User Group library. If you would like further information about the software, the readme files for the disks in the club library are on the two Catalog disks.

The disks are now arranged in numerical order. The disks that were listed by month and year under the old system now are listed by a number that shows the year and month the disk was put in the club library. For example: the disk that was called "Best of 82" is now "8200", the disk that was "Jan 83" is now "8301". New disks are now put into the club library in a straight numerical order.

You don't need to wait for the next DOM meeting to buy the DOM disks. You can mail order DOM disks from Tim O'Neal. The cost is $2.00 per disk for Members, $3.00 per disk for Non-Members, plus $1.00 per each 5 disks mailing charge. Send your order to Tim O'Neil, Box 396, Bedford, TX 76021.

Kathryn

DOM Particulars

The North Texas PC Users Group copies these programs as a service to the club and its members. We try to test all the programs, but we do not warrant the programs in any way. You must decide if a program is suitable for your system and use. 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: At prevailing prices plus $1.00 for mailer and postage. Mail your order to Tim O'Neil, Box 396, Bedford, TX 76021.
PRICE: Members: $2.00 per diskette (if the program is on two diskettes the price is $4.00). Non-members: $3.00 each diskette
CATALOG DISKETTES: Curently this is a two volume set priced at $4.00. This has all of the readme files from each diskette in the club library.
MEDIA: DSDD 5 1/4" Formated as 9 sector data diskettes. Public domain software only, standard full disclaimers
AVAILABILTY: We will do our best to have all past diskettes at each meeting. DOM sales will begin at the DOM counter around 9:00, and continue until 2:00 PM
IBM EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER: If IBM has published an Exchange for this month, the issues will be available at the auditorium AFTER the main meeting, at no charge to paid up memebers of the NTPCUG.

Bulletin Board News *continued from page 8.*

type appears on your screen only after it has been sent to and echoed by the computer you are communicating with. I rarely get ahead of our BBS, but can almost always get ahead of services like PC- Pursuit. Sliding window protocols take this into account by not requiring the wait for acknowledgement of each packet before another is transmitted. It seems to me that this protocol might not be the best for a noisy line without a satellite.

Computer communication is very similar in concept to human communications. Various languages and protocols exist to support this because there are a wide variety of situations to which the communications must adapt, and no one language has yet been found that will master every situation.

Tom A. Prickett

North Texas PC Users Group Disk of the Month Library

Use order blank at end of catalog. If order blank has been used, list disk numbers and description on plain paper and mail with check or money order to:

Tim O'Neil
Box 396
Bedford, Texas 76021

Each disk $2.00 to members, $3.00 to non members. Add $1.00 per order (not per disk) for postage.

NOTE: All programs that have a common number are on the same disk.

SUBJECT INDEX

SEPTEMBER 1987 K.A. Crawford, Indexer

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..... Disk No.
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Tot buckets and math school	0144

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F

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FINANCE, financial formulas (20)	0008
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	Disk No.
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Transtok	0178

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..... Disk No.
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L

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Lotus 123: Demos, templates, utilites. (Also disks containing both Lotus 123 and Symphony templates, utilities, etc.)

	Disk No.
123 Business Tools #1	0110
123 Business Tools #2	0111
123 SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TEMPLATES	0112
123 STATISTICS TEMPLATES	0113
123 UTILITY MACROS	0115
123PREP, ASCII files to Lotus 123	0012
COSTTL (Lotus 123 worksheet)	0001
DEPTMT.WKS (Lotus 123 template)	0061
Desktop (LOTUS 123 template)	0025
FEDTAX84 (Lotus 123 template)	0029
FITT 85 2 disks	0064
LOTUS 123 Investor Templates	0133
LOTUS 123 Macros	0134
LOTUS 123/Symphony tech notes	0135
McGee's Advanced 123 Class Disk	0060
McGee's Beginning 123 Class Disk	0117
PAD (Lotus 123 template)	0001
POWER WORKSHEETS (LOTUS 123)	0022
PROFORMA (Lotus 123 template)	0001
RIPAMORT (Lotus 123 template)	0001
TREND123 (123/SYM template)	0123
UTILITY 1-2-3 (Lotus 123 macros)	0020
Whiterock #1	0136

Lotus--Symphony templates, demos, utilities.

	Disk No.
Residential real estate analysis	0119
SYMPHONY #1, templates/macros	0040
Symphony #2, templates/macros	0041
Symphony Command Language Instruct.	0138
Symphony Insurance Industry Demos.	0139
Symphony Medical Industry Demos.	0140
Symphony Pers Finan Sys 2 disks	0137

M

Magazines (See Periodicals on disk)

Math/Statistics

	Disk No.
EPISTAT	0013
FREETK	0193
SPC PROFESSIONAL ver. 1.1	0155

Memory resident utilities (See: Utilities-- DOS, Disk, & Drive utilities)
Monitor utilities (See: Utilities)

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	Disk No.
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BAGPIPES (music)	0026
JUKEBOX (music)	0026
JUNIOR MUSIC MACHINE	0081
PIANOMAN	8509
PIANOMAN TUNES	0049
SIREN (sound effect)	8200
WILLTELL (Music)	8306

P

Pascal/Turbo Pascal (See: Programming--Pascal/Turbo Pascal)

Periodicals on disk (Magazines, newsletters, etc. published on disk. Also, indexes to computer magazines.)

	Disk No.
PC-NEWS article database (PC-FILE)	0034

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Printer utilities, spoolers, etc. (See: Utilities--Printer)

Programming

	Disk No.
APL*PLUS/PC	0062
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BAT2018	8408
D85 Forth ver. 2.1.0	0152
Flowcharter ver. 1.45	0185
MONITOR, application development	0008

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	Disk No.
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ASSEMBLER BLUEBOOK	0105
ASSEMBLER COMM UTILITIES	0101
ASSEMBLER DEVICE DRIVERS, GENERAL	0099
ASSEMBLER DEVICE DRIVERS, PRINTERS	0102
ASSEMBLER DOS INTERFACE	0103
Assembly language class examples	0015
CHASM ver. 4.07S	0077
D86 2.22	0171
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8-SIMPLE, BASIC program utility	0008
BASIC PROF. (tutor for BASIC)	8501
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C CHECKER (C language) 0028
C XREF (C language) 0028
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CODEVIEW, by Microsoft (demo) D005
CROBOTS (C language) 0104
CWINDOW: Complete Windowing Package 0096
DESMET C ROUTINES AND FUNCTIONS 0094
DESMET C VERSION OF SCREEN EDITOR 0097
ED: E.K. REAMS SCREEN EDITOR 0097
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Project management (See: Business applications)

R

RAM resident calendars, desktop managers, etc.

(See: Business applications)

S

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Disk No.
123 SCIENCE & ENGINEERING Templates 0112

Science & Engineering--Astronomy

Disk No.
ASTRONOMY COLLECTION #1 0109
MOONBEAM 0109
OPTICS 0109
SATELITE, display elevation 8411
SOLAR 0109
STARFINDER 0030
STORM 0109
SUNSET 0109

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Spreadsheet programs (Templates for Lotus/Symphony, see: Lotus)

Disk No.
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PC-CALC ver. 2.0 0037
Spreadsheet Programming Language 0148
TurboCALC ver. 8.01 0149

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Symphony templates, utilities, etc. (See: Lotus--Symphony)

T

Taxes (See: Financal applications--Taxes)
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(See under:
Lotus
Lotus--Symphony
dBase II/III/III+)
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U

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Buerg Utilities 0160
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SQPC ver.1.31 0160
SQUISH ver. 3.3 0160
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SWAPNAME ver. 1.2 0160
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FPRINT, print spooler	0059
LP ver. 1.4 (Oki ML92	0160
LP ver. 1.6 (HP LaserJet)	0160
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MX, printer setup program	8308
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W

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ChiWriter Scholar's Edition	0196
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FULL SCREEN EDITOR	0038
IBM Writing Assistant (Demo disk)	D001
INDEX, for a document	0059
Outline! ver. 3 15	0167
PC-STYLE	8608
PC-TOUCH, typing tutor	8408
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ORDER FORM North Texas PC Users Group DISK OF THE MONTH

QUANTITY	DOM DISK NUMBER (and Description)	# OF DISKS IN SET	PRICE EACH	AMOUNT
	Total number of disks and total amount		XXXXXXXX	
	Add mailing charge of $1 for each 5 disks		XXXXXXXX	
			TOTAL	

Send Completed Order to: Tim O'Neil, P.O. Box 396, Bedford, TX 76021

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

North Texas PC Users Group, Inc.

The NTPCUG is a non-profit, independent organization of individuals learning to apply personal computers to practical problems. For additional information about the Group, call (214)746-4699.

Aplication Status: (Check One)
> > > > _____ NEW MEMBER
> > > > _____ RENEWAL
> > > > _____ CHANGE OF ADDRESS

NAME: (Last) _____ (First) _____ (MI) _____

OR Company/Organization: _____

ADDRESS: _____ (Suite/Apt) _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: Home (_____) _____ Work (_____) _____ (Ext) _____ (Check Preferred #.)

Do you want access to the Club RBBS? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Please initial here _____ if you wish to have your address included on member lists sold for the club's benefit to advertisers of IBM compatible products.

The NTPCUG expects and encourages volunteer participation by members in helping put on the monthly meetings at the INFOMART. This usually consists of a few hours of your time each year. If asked, would you consider assisting the Group with one or more of the following activities:

((Please check all that apply.)

[A] Working with NTPCUG Volunteer Committees? (Circle selections)

[IB] Information/Registration	[MM] Membership	[GP] Group Purchase
[NL] Newsletter	[ES] Equipment Setup	[FB] Financial/Bookeeping
[DM] Disk of the Month (DOM)	[PR] Publicity/Public Relations	[ST] Startext NTPCUG Column

[B] Giving a talk or demonstration to a small group?

[C] Giving a talk or demonstration to a large group?

[D] Being a volunteer, informal "consultant" in your area of expertise for NTPCUG members?

Would you be interested if the Group arranges instructional courses (at various levels) in any of the following areas at a cost per student of approximately $5/classroom hour?

(Please circle or specify, indicating level preferred, i.e., beginning, intermediate, advanced)

[A] Spreadsheet software -- Lotus 1-2-3, Supercalc4, etc. (Please specify) _____
[B] Data Base software -- dBase, RBase, Reflex, etc. (Please specify) _____
[C] Word Processing software -- Word Perfect, Wordstar, etc. (Please specify) _____
[D] Integrated software -- Framework, Symphony, etc. (Please specify) _____
[E] Programming Languages -- APL, Assembly, BASIC, "C", Fortran, Forth, Pascal, (other) _____

Do not write in this area -- for use by NTPCUG.

Annual Dues are: $24.00 (Regular Membership) _____ $12.00 (Student Membership with ID) _____

Applications should be mailed to: North Texas PC Users Group, Inc.
(Make checks payable to NTPCUG.) P.O. Box 780066
Dallas, TX 75378-0066

Received: $ _____ Check No. _____ Date: __/__/__ by: _____

Abstract

The present software package is designed primarily for the systems administrator in a corporate environment or a consultant setting up systems for businesses although it would be usable by any individual who wants to set up a menu driven system for his programs or wants to control access by others to his computer. The program allows one to quickly build a menu driven, multilevel controlled access programming environment designed to prevent the accidental destruction of data and programs on the personal computer by the unsophisticated user. The system further includes the capability to present help screens, prompts to the user and even encryption of the program and data files.

TheEMCEE

The intelligent menu system
distributed by
Command Software Systems, Inc.

Supports All IBM and compatibles including the PS/2 line from IBM using PC-DOS OR MS-DOS 2.0 OR LATER. Also supports multiple disk drives and most networks. Requires system to have 256 Kb of RAM and two drives

When I recently received TheEMCEE menu system program for the purpose of preparing this review, I could not believe my luck. While this program certainly in not without its faults, it can be made to do everything I need to do with it in an office environment. As will be provided in more detail below, the program has the capability to provide a wide variety of security levels to prevent the unauthorized access of programs in the computer. It also has the ability to easily create a complete menu driven system for accessing and running both commercial and user created programs. It further can supply different security levels for different menus and even subportions of menus as well as providing means for controlling the access to DOS and utility program type commands.

I had recently obtained a new IBM PS/2 Model 60 for the office which was to be used by myself and several secretaries of having widely varying capabilities. I was in the final process of writing the first few of several programs to be used by these secretaries and was trying to figure out how manage the computer sharing process. First I wanted to keep the secretaries out of my files. Second, the secretaries were used to the menu system of Wang brand word processors. Third, some the of the secretaries required very explicit instructions when asked to complete any project that was minutely different from what they had done previously many times. And finally it was desirable that temporary secretaries brought in on numerous occasions be able to perform some of the projects without undue amount of instruction.

The documentation accompanying this software is in the IBM standard size 3 ring binder and comprises 143 pages. When I first read the manual, I was not greatly impressed because there was no tutorial. I realize that everyone learns differently, but good tutorials like those that accompany LOTUS 123 or Microsoft Word have always made my learning faster and easier.

When I read the documentation the second time and started experimenting with the commands while reading, I started to realize the power of this package. I would caution however that, in my opinion this is not a "user friendly" package. I have been heavily involved in personal computers since the days of the Commodore PET in 1978 and presently an IBM PS/2 Model 80 is the computer primarily used in my home. However, I made many mistakes and reread the documentation many times before I got the system to work according to my desires.

The instructions for installation do indicate that the install process will make a new AUTOEXEC.BAT file and rename the previous one as OLDAUTO.BAT. However all that is in the new BAT file is the single command EMCEE. Thus one must either type in the all the commands from the old bat file or merely add the command to the old BAT file and rename it. The installation program should give one the option of adding to the existing file, making a new one, or bypassing this step. The installation program did have a refinement not found in many programs of recognizing that there already was an OLDAUTO.BAT file on the directory. Accordingly, it asked for permission before writing over it.

When it was installed, I found 7 new files on my root directory two of which were hidden and read-only. There was also a subdirectory with 25 additional files 4 of which were hidden. Since I like to keep my root directory as clean as possible, I created a new subdirectory called MCE. I also modified the AUTOEXEC.BAT file with the commands SUBST F: C:\MCE and F: immediately before the EMCEE command. The reason for this was to create the illusion that EMCEE would be installed in the root directory of the drive F:. I then reinstalled the EMCEE program to drive F:. Although, this tended to confuse the EMCEE program for a couple of its internal help refinements, I preferred this to the unnecessary cluttering of the root directory.

As received, the menu system already had provision for several user usable menus such as a Word processing menu, a Data base menu, a DOS menu etc. It also had a menu for the system operator and a provision to logoff. I took the spreadsheet menu and modified it according to instructions to call for a specific spreadsheet within the SMART Innovative Systems integrated program. I had to write a small procedure within Smart to load the report but otherwise it was straightforward. The secretary could now hit a single number within the ►

spreadsheet menu and then start entering data into an expense report form. When the secretary was finished and exited SMART, the system was returned to the menu for further selections. Although, I didn't find it necessary at this time, I could have had another selection for printing the spreadsheet in accordance with prescribed parameters.

The EMCEE program is designed to pass parameters to the called program. This is how I called the spreadsheet program within SMART. I also used the same procedure to call several distinct programs within FOX-BASE+ for the database portion of the menu system. The EMCEE system also has the capability to have one menu entry call another menu entry in the event that one wants to tie a string of operations together. An example would be in PCWrite where the editing program is separate from the printing program and the operator would likely always want to print the results of what had just been edited. Another example would be where a string of operations must be performed in a specific order to assure the correct set of data in a final report.

For each menu selection, and there can be up to 32 selection per screen load, there are 24 items that can be edited. The parameter item listed above is one of these 24 items. Only 4 items must be filled in for elementary selections. These four are the menu Title, the Program path, the Data path and the Name of the file being called. The program and data paths are designed to take care of the situation where the program being called is required to operate on data in a different directory or subdirectory from where the program is located without the user having to get into the program and change internal switches in the application program.

Among the other selections are the password level for that selection and whether or not EMCEE should stay resident while executing the program etc. If you choose a negative answer for keeping EMCEE resident, only 3 Kb of ram resident memory is used up rather than the 92 Kb used if you opt for slightly more speed by keeping the program resident. Since I tend to use memory hog programs like Foxbase and Rbase, I normally answer no to this question.

As mentioned previously, the program had a DOS menu. The selections on this menu merely called up various DOS commands. However, it was a simple matter to substitute my sorted directory and other utility commands for those originally used. Further, through the restrictions provided by the menu editor for each selection, the types and or ranges of programs and directories can be limited to those provided in the menu selection. Again, since each menu selection can have it's own security password level, access to various functions can be controlled. In this way, as an example, only certain users could use the COPY or DELETE commands.

Although the program makes provisions to encrypt data and program files, it does warn that any attempt to run these programs outside the EMCEE environment may cause the computer to 'hang' such that the system may have to be rebooted to commence any further work. I think that with the other security capabilites of the menu system, the encryption capability is superfluous but it is there for those who have the need. Further the possibility of a power interruption during the encrypting process could render the document useless. Thus a continuous back-up procedure would also be desirable if such an option were elected.

The program has many more features which would take more room to review than is permitted by the allotted space of this article. One example is a pathway program to allow programs such as dBase to find the overlay and supplemental files that they need without having to keep multiple copies of them on your hard disk. Another example is a Floppy Disk Identity Verification capability such that data is not stored on the wrong floppy diskette. It has an Autostart capability to allow given menu selections to start and run automatically at specified times as would be useful for doing long jobs during off hours. The encryption process can also be used to hide directories. And finally, it has a built in System Log to monitor and report who uses the system, when, for how long, and what applications and projects they are accessing and as well as informing of attempts to access the system with invalid passwords.

Although I am sure you would never guess by my glowing review of this product, I am usually quite skeptical of commercial utility type programs as they usually claim much more than they can deliver. While the lack of a tutorial, the "at times less than clear instructions" and the use of the root directory for 7 program files did not initially endear this program to me, it certainly filled a need for me. I think it could find a useful home in any person's library that needed to prepare menu driven systems especially where security type controlled access to the programs, data or personal computer system was desirable. It could even find a use where someone such as an attorney or accountant needed a good logging system to keep track of time for the purpose of charging clients.

Although I have never before gotten deeply involved in any other controlled access program similar to this, I have been exposed to them by other system administrators and I believe this is as good as any I have heard about. In addition it makes designing a menu driven system a breeze once one overcomes the initial learning curve. My experience so far would certainly get me to recommend the system to anyone who had a need to design menu systems or needed to provide others with controlled access to his computer.

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LAPTOP $495: Not IBM compatible; but, includes cable to xfer files to/from PC. Includes 300B internal modem, 32k memory, battery operated, 80 column, case, and software. Great for text editing when no outlet is available. Call David at 380-8172.

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DATELINE: NEW YORK

Executive confesses to computer collaboration using In-Synch!

John Merson, noted microcomputer industry executive, has confessed to using IN-SYNCH for the purpose of computer collaboration. This is the first public statement in what appears to be the rapid proliferation of IN-SYNCH-based co-computing throughout industry and government.

Collaborating the Easy Way

In an exclusive interview, Merson recounted his actions, from his first co-computing session to his full-blown use of IN-SYNCH. "It started innocently enough," Merson said. "My partner, who was working in our branch office, needed help drafting a proposal for a prospective new client. With IN-SYNCH, we were able to work together, in real-time, on a WordPerfect document as well as a 1-2-3 spreadsheet. We even developed an AutoCAD drawing and threw in some ChartMaster graphs to spice up the proposal. IN-SYNCH made co-computing easy and quick—just as if we were sitting side-by-side. No fax machines. No overnight mail. No special networking. Just our modems and the regular phone lines."

Collaborators Get Carried Away

According to Merson, the computer collaboration didn't stop there. "I guess I got carried away," admitted Merson, "but it was amazing what we could do with IN-SYNCH." Apparently, Merson and his partner next used IN-SYNCH to prepare a slide presentation, using screens selected from the proposal they had developed. These sequenced "slides", including text, drawings, graphs and spreadsheet data, were then shown PC-to-PC (again using IN-SYNCH) to their prospective client. "The prospect had IN-SYNCH on his PC too," continued Merson, "so we dialed him up and delivered our sales pitch online. He loved it! Said it was just the kind of state-of-the-art stuff he needs in today's fast-paced business world. We beat out the competition and got the job."

Collaborating and Proud of It

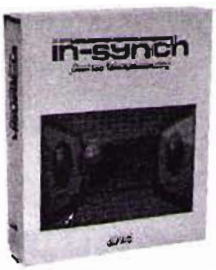
Merson showed little remorse. "You'd do the same thing if you saw IN-SYNCH. This co-computing is going to catch on like crazy. The possibilities are too hot to ignore. You can co-run all the popular PC software packages. You can transmit and annotate "snapshots" of screen displays. Develop, save and present "slide shows." And IN-SYNCH keeps "minutes" so you've got a complete audit trail of everything you've done. Managers, engineers, programmers, sales people—they're all going to be co-computing with IN-SYNCH. I just did it first. And I'll certainly do it again. And again!"

Poll Shows Collaboration Spreading

Results of an unofficial poll taken by this reporter show Merson's prediction to be proving true. An inside source at MCI stated, "We use IN-SYNCH all the time to analyze important revenue data. It eliminates the need to express diskettes between headquarters and remote branches." And according to a highly-placed source at Rockwell International, "We're using IN-SYNCH for software development as well as for the training of new PC program users." In perhaps the most stunning admission, the president of Engineering Computer Services, Inc. said, "We're using IN-SYNCH with AutoCAD to help designers and clients review architectural drawings, thereby expediting schedules and cutting costs."

Cheers for Collaborators

According to a spokesman for AVTC, producer of IN-SYNCH, the company will not press charges against Merson. "We knew when we released IN-SYNCH that it was the first and only product to bring teleconferencing to the desktop of every PC user. With an innovative product, you've got to expect innovative uses. Off the record, well, frankly we're delighted and we'd just like to say: keep on collaborating!"



For more information or the name of your nearest IN-SYNCH dealer, Call 1-800-641-4461 ext. 65
In New York State, 516-420-8080 ext 65

AVTC

American Video Teleconferencing Corp.
110 Bi-County Boulevard
Farmingdale, New York 11735

Selected SIG Happenings

News and Meeting Notes on Special Interest Groups

Changes in Times for SIG's

The SIG schedule is not set as of the publication deadline. At the Board of Directors' meeting on September 16th some schedule changes will be discussed. We will put the schedule on the Club Bulletin Board as soon as it is set.

So you want to start a new SIG!

Anyone wishing to organize a new SIG will need to go through a small amount of "red tape" in order to organize the new group. The steps are as follows:

- Obtain a SIG Request Form from our booth near the front of the Infomart (or from Phil Chamberlain).

- On this form, show

- The name and purpose of the proposed SIG

- The name and telephone numbers of both a proposed leader and assistant leader.

- Three choices for meeting times (recognizing that 9 A.M. and noon are already full, unless one of the current SIG's is discontinued).

- Signatures of twelve (12) active members of the NTPCUG as a statement of their interest in supporting and maintaining the SIG. (These signatures WILL be checked against the current membership list.)

The SIG will be activated at the very next meeting. HOWEVER, the Board of Directors may at any time re-schedule the SIG, or cancel it completely, if the attendance falls so low that the existence of the SIG is preventing the formation of new SIG's with greater interest.

Phil Chamberlain

Beginners SIG

There will definitely be at least one hour for Beginners in October. It is likely that there will be several hours devoted to this SIG.

Communications SIG

The Communications SIG started out with an explanation of why there was a different face at the front of the room this month. Fred Williams, our regular SIG leader had to be out of town on business so Pete Testa was acting Sig leader this month.

We had an interesting discussion about a type of Pay bulletin board, Startext, which is a service provided by The Fort Worth Star Telegram. The numerous advantages of Startext's Electronic Banking feature were pointed out by a few SIG members during the discussion.

Next was a short rap session on speed matching between modems on opposite ends of a phone line. Transmission speed "Downshifting" as it's sometimes referred to as, is a capability that many modems implement to establish a connection when the modem on the other end is running at one of the lower speeds.

A question and answer session popped up next. Some potential reasons why a script file works correctly on some systems and not on another were kicked about. This really got interesting as the discussion evolved and more variables were introduced. The member is going to try the system on another phone line that works with the other systems and let us all know what happens.

William Bennett, one of our Comm Sig members posed an interesting analogy for what is Protocol. William's comparison of Protocol to a Traffic Cop Between Devices proved to be an easily understood definition for all.

In the closing minutes of the session William Bennett proposed an offer to do a series of communications seminars based on the Qmodem communications software. This offer was enthusiastically received and will be further discussed.

Pete Testa

DAC Software SIG

The initial meeting of the SIG was well attended which suggests that there is considerable interest in the Accouting package and related offerings from DAC Software. As a result of feedback from the group the format of the meeting in the future will be one of a structured presentation or discussion on a designated topic for about half an hour followed by an open exchange of information. The presentation for the next meeting will be on how to use the Custom Reports facility within the Accounting package to produce your own financial statements.

Mike Macaulay

dBase Programmers SIG

This month we will be covering Brief and dBrief, which combined, offer the most powerful text editor available for dBase programmers. Although you may not consider the decision of which text editor to use an important one, consider this; 75% of dBase development is done with a text editor. dBrief is a sophisticated development tool which can cut your total development time by up to 50%. The features of dBrief rival that of many program generators due to it's incredibly flexible macro facility. If you spend a lot of time in Wordperfect, Wordstar, or worse Edlin, writing dBase code this meeting will be a MUST!

David Hayden

DOS SIG

DOS SIG's September meeting continued discussion of AUTOEXEC.BAT files combined with emphasis on differences between .BAT files and CONFIG.SYS files. Discussion surged around appropriate use of PATH vs the new (3.3) PC- DOS APPEND program in AUTOEXEC.BAT files.

►

Jim Hoisington, NTPCUG President, reminded SIG participants that computer operation "tuned" by AUTOEXEC.BAT on start-up could be later modified during operation since these files mostly contain executable programs. Most of these could be called and/or reset at any time by the user, Hoisington reminded participants.

As usual, significant questions from SIG members concerning hard-disk operation, new features in coming DOS versions and differences in various versions of MS/PC-DOS were given a major slice of the SIG session.

October DOS SIG meeting focus will continue exploration of .BAT files, basic operating parameters with subtle yet significant impact on operation and DOS enhancements and extensions.

Reagan Andrews

ENABLE SIG

Enable is a software package which allows the user to integrate word processing, spreadsheet, graphics, database, andtelecommunications.

At the September SIG meeting, members discussed how to use Enable's mailmerge feature, and learned that you can edit under Enable's Display mode by pressing the F4 key to edit the field the cursor is on.

We decided to send out a questionaire to Enable users to get an idea of their level of knowledge in the different areas of Enable and what areas they are interested in for future meetings. If you use Enable and have not given me your address, you can call me so that you can give your input on the direction of future meetings.

Prior meetings we have had Mike Travor, The Software Group's local representative as a speaker, enlightening us on linking databases, discussing features of the new Enable 2.0 version and answering questions. Mike is extremely knowledgeable about the Enable product.

Susan Watts

Lotus SIG

The September meeting of the Lotus SIG was a demonstration of the Cambridge Spreadsheet Analyst. This program provides model builders a tool to analyze their worksheeets to check for pos sible errors.

The October meeting will be a presentation of user-defined menu macros. Come to the October meeting and learn how to create your own menus.

The Lotus SIG meeting also answers questions from those in attendance, so if you have a question, stop by and see us. You can also leave your questions in the Lotus Conference.

Peyton Weaver and Mark Gruner

Getting Crazy With The Path

Bob Ackerman
Greater South Bay Users Group

The PATH command is a very powerful feature of DOS. It allows the system to look in many directories for a particular program. The PATH command is not needed on most floppy systems, but is a requirement on most hard disk drives.

In order to run any program you will have to tell the computer where to look for that particular program. DOS will normally look into the current directory for a program but if the program you desire is in another directory, you have to tell the computer where to look. This is where the PATH statement comes in.

To tell the computer where to look for a program, most users place the PATH command within the AUTOEXEC.BAT file. Upon start up of the system, the PATH command is automatically set up. This is fine for most users. But the PATH command does have some limitations.

The PATH command is limited to 128 characters in length. For most users this will not be a problem. But for some of the larger hard disk drives (30 MB and larger), the user might find a need for a larger path. In order to create a larger PATH the user would need to use .BAT files to start up each application. The technique here is the same regardless of the number of applications installed on a system.

For this example we will talk about WordPerfect. The program in this example is stored in the directory called \WP and contains the sub-directories of \WP\WP, \WP\DICTION, and \WP\LEARN. Into the \WP\WP sub-directory are placed all programs needed to run WordPerfect. Into the \WP\DICTION are placed all dictionary files and into the \WP\LEARN are placed the learning files. This breakdown will limit the number of files in the \WP directory and make it easier to find a file.

Now to start WordPerfect you will need to create a .BAT file. This .BAT file will contain commands needed to start up WordPerfect, but also will contain a couple of extra commands. Examine this .BAT file:

```
PATH C:\OLDPATH.BAT
PATH C:\;C:\DOS;C:\WP;C:\WP\WP;C:\WP\DIC-
TION;C:\WP\LEARN
CHDIR \WP
WP
CD \
C:\OLDPATH.BAT
```

Now we will examine this .BAT file line by line. The first line uses the PATH command to display the current path setting. Notice the output redirection following the word PATH. The PATH command by itself will print the current PATH settings. This output redirection will redirect this output into a .BAT file called OLDPATH.BAT.

Next is a new PATH command. The PATH command does not have to be only in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file! Notice that this PATH command sets the path to look in all directories associated with WordPerfect plus a couple of directories needed to file other DOS functions.

The next two statements will move the user into the \WP directory and then start up WordPerfect. Upon exiting WordPerfect, the next command will move the user back to the root directory.

The final command will execute a .BAT file called OLDPATH.BAT. This .BAT file was created on the first line and contains the original PATH settings before entering into Word Perfect. You system will now be returned to its original start up configuration.

Now what does this really do for us? By limiting the PATH statement to just a few directories the system can run much faster. By logically limiting your directories the system will only have to look in a couple of directories for a program. If you have a system like mine which has sixty plus sub-directories and one thousand three hundred files, the speed increase is very noticeable.

A Short Discourse On Electricity

"Forbidden Planet" BBS via GSBUG

Today's scientific question is: What in the world is electricity? And where does it go after it leaves the toaster?

Here is a simple experiment that will teach you an important electrical lesson : on a cool, dry day, scuff your feet along a carpet, then reach your hand into a friend's mouth and touch one of his dental fillings. Did you notice how your friend twitched violently and cried out in pain? This teaches us that electricity can be a

very powerful force, but we must never use it to hurt others unless we need to learn an important electrical lesson.

It also teaches us how an electrical circuit works. When you scuffed your feet, you picked up a batch of "electrons" which are very small objects that carpet manufacturers weave into carpets so they will attract dirt. The electrons travel through your bloodstream and collect in your finger, where they form a spark that leaps to your friend's filling, then travels down to his feet and back into the carpet, thus completing the circuit.

Amazing Electronic Fact: If you scuffed your feet long enough without touching anything, you would build up so many electrons that your finger would explode! But this is nothing to worry about, unless you have carpeting.

Although we modern persons tend to take our electric lights, radios, mixers, etc., for granted, hundreds of years ago people did not have any of these things, which is just as well because there was no place to plug them in. Then along came the first Electrical Pioneer, Benjamin Franklin, who flew a kite in a lightning storm and received a serious electrical shock. This proved that lightning was powered by the same forces as carpets, but it also damaged Franklin's brain so severely that he started speaking only in incomprehensible maxims, such as "A penny saved is a penny earned." Eventually, he had to be given a job running the post office. After Franklin came a herd of Electrical Pioneers whose names have become part of our electrical terminology: Myron Bolt, Mary Louise Amp, James Watt, Bob Transformer, etc. These pioneers conducted many important electrical experiments. For example, in 1780, Luigi Galvani discovered (this is the truth) that when he attached two different kinds of metal to the leg of a frog, an electrical current developed and the frog's leg kicked, even though it was no longer actually attached to the frog, which was dead anyway. Galvani's discovery led to enormous advances in the field of amphibian medicine. Today, skilled veterinary surgeons can take a frog that has been seriously injured or killed, implant pieces of metal in its muscles and watch it hop back into the pond just like a normal frog, except for the fact that it sinks like a stone.

But the greatest Electrical Pioneer of all was Thomas Edison, who was a brilliant inventor despite the fact that he had little formal education and lived in New Jersey. Edison's first major invention, in 1877, was the phonograph, which could soon be found in thousands of American homes, where it basically sat until 1923, when the record was invented. But Edison's greatest achievement came in 1879, when he invented the electric company. Edison's design was a brilliant adaptation of the simple electrical circuit: the electric company sends electricity through a wire to a customer, then immediately gets the electricity back through another wire, then (this is the brilliant part) sends it right back to the customer again.

This means that an electric company can sell a customer the same batch of electric- ity thousands of times a day and never get caught, since very few customers take the time to examine their electricity closely. In fact, the last year in which any new electricity was generated in the United States was 1937: the electric companies have been merely re-selling it ever since, which is why they have so much free time to apply for rate increases.

Today, thanks to men like Edison and Franklin, and frogs like Galvani's, we receive almost unlimited benefits from electricity. For example, in the past decade, scientists have developed the laser, an electronic appliance that generates a beam of light so powerful that it can vaporize a bulldozer 2,000 yards away, yet so precise that doctors can use it to perform delicate operations of the human eyeball, provided they remember to change the power setting from "VAPORIZE BULLDOZER" to "DELICATE."

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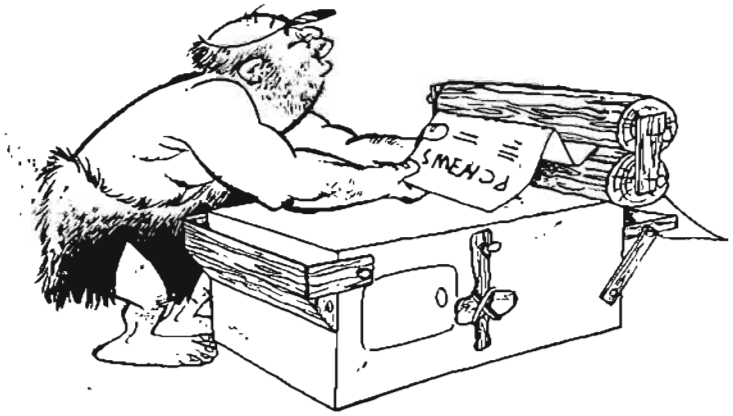
DEADLINE
Copy deadline for November NT PC NEWS:

October 15th.

Meeting Dates:

October Meeting - 2nd Sat. (10th)
November Meeting - 2nd Sat. (14th)
December Meeting - **3rd Sat**

Editor's Notes...



THINK HOW GOOD IT'LL BE WHEN WE GET OUR LASER PRINTER!

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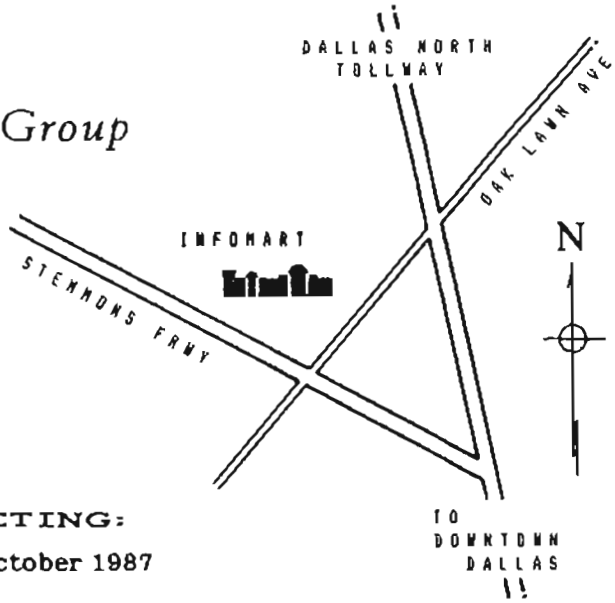

NEXT MEETING:

10 October 1987