SLO BYTES HARD COPY

Banner by Bob Ward

What's New

• **by Bob Ward, Secretary**

Last month we had a potpourri of Internet "stuff". George gave us a demonstration of the Internet on Compuserve, followed by me and a demonstration of I-Phone. Lastly, Gerald Mintz gave us a preview of "pictures on a disk", an added feature brought to you by many photo developers.

A note about I-Phone... Unfortunately it seemed like no one was paying attention to our calls. Come to find out, I needed to turn the microphone sound mixer ALL THE WAY UP for voice to output through the program. I spent 3 or 4 days trying everything imaginable, including re-loading the software via tape from my machine at home and still couldn't get it to work. Although the microphone sound mixer was one notch from MAX, there wasn't enough gain to do the trick. Although the program can be frustrating the rewards are great. I spent 45 minutes on-line talking to an individual from Belgium. He spoke 3 languages (I'm glad he only tried English on me), and 3 years ago spent a night in San Luis Obispo on a trip up the coast of California. It is a small world, indeed! Tonight I spoke with a student from Kwait who is studying chemical engineering at Colorado University. I learned much about the aftermath of Dessert Storm after the press dropped their news coverage for something more spectacular. For the latest version of I-phone, you may download it from the BBS (528-6172) as IPHONE17.EXE. And you can do it very quickly, if you have a 28.8 baud modem to match that which we recently installed on the club BBS.

PaperMaster—Your Personal File Cabinet

• **by Peter Madle, SLO Bytes PCUG**

This was a difficult review to write. NO – NOT THE SOFTWARE, that was easy to install and easy to use; DocuMagix Inc's advertisements are correct – it is easy. IT WAS THE WRITING OF THIS REVIEW THAT GAVE ME PROBLEMS! Enough twaddle – on with the review – you'll see what I mean later.

The "User's Guide to PaperMaster" starts with: "Welcome to PaperMaster! This unique application helps you get your paper documents completely organized quickly and easily".

A truer word was never said; the well written guide leads you step-by-step through a sequence of simple routines to help you, and I quote:-
– Get organized quickly and easily
– Create your custom file cabinet
– Scan and file important documents

Club Calendar

• **SEPTEMBER 3RD**•

Marsha Lifter–an Educational Technology Consultant– demonstrates educational software such as: The Way Things Work, My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary, The Lost Mind of Dr. Brian, How Many Bugs in a Box, 3D Atlas, SIM Town, and All-In-One Language Learning.

• **OCTOBER 1ST** •

Open

• **NOVEMBER 5TH** •

Lee Tarbet form Novell will demonstrate Perfect Office.

In This Issue...

ScreenCraze II

• by Pete Madle, SLO Bytes PCUG

The well written User's Guide tells you what ScreenCraze is, and what it does:-

"ScreenCraze is three packages in one. It contains a screen saver, an animated wallpaper, and an editor that allows you to create your own animated movies to use with the screen saver and animated wallpaper."

After your system has been idle for a period of from 30 to 16,000 seconds (which you can set in the "Setup" window), ScreenCraze will start your choice of one of the 38 different screen saver movies provided, one of the movies that you have created yourself, or any AfterDark screen savers you may have installed on your machine. The setup window also allows you to select various options and to make a play list which can automatically play your choices in the sequence in which they are listed, in a random sequence, or can change the selected movie once a day.

ScreenCraze, which is designed to run under Microsoft Windows in either standard or enhanced mode and which requires a VGA screen for best performance, can be installed in the usual "Windows" manner as described in the User's Guide. A sound card is required to play the audio portions of these savers and movies.

One of the main features of ScreenCraze is the ScreenCraze Editor which is clearly described in the "Tutorial" section of the User's Guide. This program allows you to create your own movies; double-clicking on its icon in Windows Program Manager brings up a screen not unlike Paintbrush. From this screen you first choose a background from one of the four provided, canvas.gif, wicker.gif, underwatr.bmp, or cyber.gif or you may create a new background from a solid or graded blend of colors of your choice. The User's Guide points out that, if your movie "is going to be used as a screen saver, the background should be dark. Dark backgrounds are desired because they result in very minimal amounts of burn-in compared to light backgrounds."

ScreenCraze provides a full directory of 97 different "actors" for your movie. The tutorial in the User's Guide shows you how, once you have set the background, you may select an actor, face it in the desired direction, and make it follow a path across the screen which you can plot for it using the "path tools" and your mouse. In later editing steps this path can be modified by moving one

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Favorite Internet Sites

• by Bob Ward, Secretary

[PLACE INTERNET ART HERE]

(Can't lost the disk, bw)

If you have any favorite Internet sites (G-rated only, please) send them to us and we will publish them in the SLO Bytes NL. I will make a message area on the BBS just for such a thing. You can e-mail them to me at bward@trumpet.aix.calpoly.edu or send them to the BBS. We also accept "snail mail".

This month...
http://www.eskimo.com/~irving/web-voyeur/
This site was mentioned by George at the last meeting. From here you can choose one of many sites that have stationary camera's stationed at strategic locations. New pictures are uploaded at regular time intervals for you viewing. Want to see what's happening on Hollywood & Vine, there is a voyeur camera set up there.
http://www.acs.oakland.edu/oak.html
You want some software? This is where we get much of our software for the library. GIGABytes of shareware all for downloading.
http://nytimesfax.com/altfax.html
Here's an 8 page sysopsis of the New York Times newspaper in Acrobat format. Downloads are about 90K and take just a couple of minutes. Updated daily, of course.

Library News

• by Bob Ward, Secretary

Gee, it's difficult to stay away from the Internet stuff. I think I did pretty good this month with a variety of programs, only a little for the Internet. Checkout #653. With Thanksgiving just around the corner, you have just enough time to learn these programs and apply them.

#651

TYC2_0 - Teach your Children through Windows; Math, reading, etc. Excellent!

MTIMER13 - A Windows timer for all your needs.

MCP150 - Master Copy 1.5. Better than XCOPY.

#652

ANNIE14 - Aunt Annies Crafts 1.4. Learn science, literature, history, etc.

AM_HC13 - catalog all your computer hardware with this database.

AMIWEB - AmiWeb HTML authoring software for the internet.

#653

NSNFPP36 - Nutrisoft Nutrition for peak performance.

NDWIN35 - Nutri-Diet for Windows with FDA #8 database of nutrients.

HSMART - Heart Smart 2.0 dietary monitoring system.

Updates: #621

BCR210 (business cards) upgraded to **BCR220**

NOTICE:

We are looking for at least two library monitors to take the place of Sam. This takes commitment and dedication. All volunteers welcome. See Bob, George, or Bill McNamara at the treasurer's desk during the meeting.

The Way Things Work

• by Frank Latchford,
Personal Computer Club of
Toronto, June 1995

Ever since I was a small boy I have always been fascinated by the way things worked. It didn't matter what it was–toaster, a bicycle, the radio, the spring door on the porch, the awnings going up and down, the cement mixer being used across the street. In those days I could watch something in operation and come away with a fairly good idea of how it worked, even if I didn't understand the underlying principles. As I got older and discovered the library I started borrowing books about things and how they worked. Many years later I discovered The Way Things Work by David Macauly. This was a different book. For the first time I had an impression of simplicity. His approach was awesome. You came away from the book with the conviction that you really understood how that thing worked. Now he has created a CD-ROM with all that wonderful material plus sound and motion. The world of Machines, Science, Inventions and Technology is opened up in unprecedented fashion.

Installing this Windows based program is simplicity itself. Just as in any Windows based program - open program Manager, and choose Run from the file menu. In the command line box type D:\setup (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive_ and click OK or press Enter. The installation is automatic after that.

What a feast is in store for you! The Great Woolly Mammoth acts as your guide to the CD-ROM and starts in a series of animated home movies that illustrate the inventor's scientific breakthroughs. You can jump from the working of machines to explanations of the scientific principles underlying them, and from the history of the inventions to biographies of the inventors themselves. Click on anything that appears in red - words, arrows or icons. This will bring you to more information about the topic you are examining. You will become so fascinated that hours will slip by as one thing leads to another and you will find yourself saying - Oh, that's how that works or I always wondered about that. This is a disk that you will treasure for years. Your kids will be fascinated by it. Who knows, it may even help to improve their marks at school! One of the most valuable aspects of How Things Work is that it can instill a spirit of discovery in the people using it.

There are several ways of accessing information on this disk. The General Index is as its name implies, a listing of every subject on the disk. Type in the subject you wish to explore and go directly to it. Choose the General Topic area such as Inventions or Machines and you are presented with an alphabet. Hit the letter you want. You are then presented with a screen showing pictures of subjects starting with that letter. Click on the picture and you are immediately at the subject.

Taking "Airplane" as an example, you will see an airplane with all of its parts labelled. Those with black printing are strictly labels. Those with red print either perform an action or give you a definition of the term. Red arrows, when clicked on, show the motion the pilot performs and the resultant movement of the plane. There is a good hypertext "Glossary of Terms" wherever further terms must be clarified. This step by step procedure leads you to an understanding of a subject that you were only hazy about before. Being able to run the animated sequences over and over again helps you see where everything fits. The Back icon will take you backwards screen by screen. This in itself helps to clarify things in your mind.

The Wooly Mammoth appears throughout and does a lot of unusual things, drawing your attention to a principle being shown. He/she/it also provides a great deal of amusement.

In the screen corner is a See Also. Click on this and you are provided with the following list: Airship, Autopilot, Hot-Air Balloon, Helicopter, Jump Jet, Airliner Wing.

The Options menu allows you to copy to the clipboard, print the active windows, set up your printer and see and activate a list of the Mammoth movies from this window.

The "Help" menu is very thorough, particularly with its instructions as what to do if and when things go wrong in any area.

The History of Machines timeline is an excellent feature, allowing you to see the interrelationship of different machines to each other.

The Principles of Science section is quite fascinating as it shows what scientific discoveries use the same scientific principle.

The Way Things Work just goes on delighting you for hours and hours. My recommendation to you is to buy it. Long after many of your CD-ROM purchases are gathering dust on your shelf, you will still be enjoying The Way Things Work.

SCREEN CRAZE II

or more of the set of points forming the path and the speed, acceleration, and deceleration of the actor can be changed by manipulating them closer together or further apart along the path. Actors can be made to grow onto the screen or rotate on the screen and sound effects can be added to your movies.

You can also create your own text actors in the form of text messages, which can be incorporated into movies. This is useful for informing people of where you are and when you will be back if you are away from your desk, or for warning people not to touch a computer that is running a time consuming task.

Movies are saved with the actors, sounds, and background embedded and not compressed unless you change the default settings. The embedded option allows you to save your movie complete, whereas saving in a non-embedded format saves just the paths. Embedded movies are easier to transport to another machine, however saving in the non-embedded format reduces the amount of disk space required. An "Option" menu can be used to allow you to change and save a movie in a format suitable for a monitor other than the one in which it was created. VGA screens with resolutions of 640x480, 320x200, and 800x600 plus the 8514a screen resolution of 1024x768 can be selected via the "Options/Screen Settings" menu.

Saving on First Class Letters

• By Robert Afelbaum, P-Bug, February 1995

Tell the truth. Wouldn't you enjoy sending a good portion of your routine first class letter correspondence for less that 32 cents a letter and, get faster and more reliable delivery than you now receive under the present postal system? Sure you would. Why not try a new approach?

Some of us already have the capability, but just never thought of using what we have for simple letters. Yes, I'm talking about saving money by using a Fax instead of our Postal System. My system includes an internal 14.4 Intel 400E Fax/Modem. Let me furnish you with a few Fax examples which should clearly demonstrate its superiority over regular letter mail.

A short time ago, I tried to cancel a subscription to a magazine publication by written letter, which included returning a few billing invoices marked "Cancel Subscription." However, annoying computer generated invoices just kept coming in for months. The billing might not have eventually stopped by itself, since these days many firms have departments that don't communicate very well with one another. I put an end to the billing quickly and easily, with a single brief Fax that was sent to area code 617 (in Massachusetts), and contained approximately 50+ words. It took a mere 46 seconds to send (before 8:00 a.m. when phone rates are low).

The cost was only 14 cents plus various Florida state and federal taxes. However, the phone company was unable to give me the exact dollar amount of these taxes for my single Fax message. Even if you assume a total tax of 20% (which is quite high), that still brings the cost up only 3 cents, for a total of 17 cents versus 32 cents for a letter.

Generally, I have found that most firms give priority status to a Fax. An ordinary letter eventually gets reviewed and answered (if ever) only as time permits. This transmission success gave me the courage to attempt sending a complex multiple page Fax.

Now for a second and final Fax example. A friend in New York who is planning to visit me in February, asked for directions to my home, which

[PLACE LETTER ART HERE]

AbCdEfGhIjKlMnOpQrStUvWxYz
(letter art by Bob Ward)

presented another opportunity to communicate quickly, easily, and cheaply by Fax. It was easy to reach him by Fax at his local office, whose capabilities are available on a 24 hour basis. I sent a two page Fax before 8:00 a.m. to Syosset N.Y.

The Fax cover page (which I designed as a template in WinFax Pro) consisted of a Heading (in a very large type size), along with two Clip-Art graphics at the top of the page, with text and graphics filling about 3/4 of the page. The second page of the Fax served as a Fax attachment, which I had previously prepared in AmiPro. This page two attachment contained lots of text along with two Clip-Art graphics, plus my scanned-in (authentic) signature, and a 3 inch by 4 inch scanned-in street map of my area. According to AmiPro, the page 2 attachment contained 244 words (1,428 characters) and was 239 KB in size. Amazingly this complex 2 page Fax took only 1 minute 45 seconds transmission time.

By the way, you can easily use your printer to make yourself a copy of everything you send out and maintain the files in a loose-leaf ring binder for quick easy reference. The cost for the Fax transmission was only 28 cents plus federal and state taxes. A real bargain by anyone's standards!

I was absolutely delighted in knowing that I now have added Faxing to my list of computer skills. A tremendous sense of personal satisfaction, is derived from the knowledge that although I'm now an old dog, I can still learn useful new tricks! Who could ask for anything more?

Fine, you say. So what's the downside of all this Faxing business? As far as I'm concerned, there is a price you must pay for almost everything you get in life. Here is the price you pay for the advantages of Faxing. 1. You must have or purchase at least a 14.4 Fax/Modem and

SLO Bytes received a letter from Hospice thanking the members of the club for donating over $125 in remembrance of our unforgotten vice-president, Sam Powers. Thank you ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls for your generosity. They are an excellent organization with dedicated volunteers who are always there when you need them.

Speaking of unforgotten. No, Sam is not forgotten, nor is all the work he did for the club. We need at least 2 dedicated volunteers to fill his place, maybe more. The library is in need of one or more people to help others copy shareware disks, set up and break down the library computers and help out before, during and after the meeting. Yes, Sam did all this by himself. Very seldom did we see him at a meeting as he spent most of his time in the library helping people. You may contact George or myself or leave me E-mail on the BBS. (I'll even accept phone calls. We need to fill these positions ASAP.) Sam's position as Vice-President will be filled during our general elections in December.

This month we will have Marsha Lifter, an educational technology consultant, demonstrate educational software you have never seen before. (as a demonstration, anyway) Among others, she will demonstrate The Way Things Work, My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary, The Lost Mind of Dr. Brian, How Many Bugs in a Box, 3D Atlas, SIM Town, All-In-One Language Learning.

As you might expect, Marsha's interest in educational software comes from her past profession as a school teacher with the Los Angeles City School District. She is an editor of both a newsletter for educational dealers, and one for parents. Presently she is working with LocoTour Software in SLO developing a CD-ROM called, "The Ultimate Kindergarten CD-ROM." Although the software presented at this meeting will be run on a Macintosh, it is all available in PC format as well. Please bring your kids, your neighbors kids, grandchildren or any other adults who might still have a little "kid" left in them to this coming meeting. It will be interesting and "educational"!

PAPERMASTER
Continued from page 1

with AutoFiling
– Find what you want in seconds!
– File directly from any windows application
– Group related documents easily
– Import and Export image and fax files
– Add annotations to your documents
– Take advantage of fax features
– Turn your scanner into a copier

It does all of that!

Basically, PaperMaster allows you to scan papers, documents, and books, or to convert existing computer document files from a word processor format into the PaperMaster format, and then place them in as many different electronic "file folders" as you need, arranged in as many "file drawers" as you need. All of these drawers and folders appear as nicely arranged icons which look like actual file cabinets and drawers on your Microsoft Windows screen. They can be opened and closed by simply clicking on them with your mouse and can have descriptive names of up to 255 characters in length. This whole process avoids the so-called "age-old DOS-problem" of "what file name did I give that letter to Charlie" and "what is in this old file named 'prdqcf56.bnz' ". Macros are included to convert files from the Microsoft Word 6.0, Microsoft Excel 5.0, WordPerfect 6.0, and WordPerfect 6.0a formats to the "TIFF" format used by Paper Master.

You can move documents from one drawer or folder to another, create new drawers or folders, read documents, or print them, by very simple movements of your mouse.

PaperMaster works with image files in the TIFF Group 4 compressed file format. To use PaperMaster effectively you need a TWAIN or ISIS compatible scanner (handheld, flatbed or sheetfed) and a laser or inkjet printer. Yes, theoretically, you can use PaperMaster without a scanner, it certainly works with document files prepared using the above word processors, and you can use a dot-

When is an Icon not an Icon?
• by Len Zakas, The Outer Edge, February, 1995

[INSERT ICON ART HERE]
I con't find it Teri. *bw*

We call the little picture we double-click on to start a program an Icon. They are convenient and sometimes make program selection obvious. But when using a Macintosh computer, running OS/2, or eventually, Windows 95, those little pictures are really Objects. The distinction between an Object and an Icon is more than just semantics.

An Object is the thing it represents; be it a program, a file, letter, data, or a piece of hardware. The "how" it (the Object) operates and works with other Objects is integral to the definition of the Object. Really, this isn't double-talk, and it can lead to a new way of working with your computer.

What are the practical aspects of this definition for Objects? Most obvious is the ability to "drag and drop" one Object onto another and have something planned actually occur.

For instance – Remembering that data can be an Object, you can drag all the phone numbers for a specific name in a Phone List Object (you've created a Data Object!) to a Letter Object. The Letter Object holds the information within itself but takes no action unless the letter calls for a name or phone number to be added.

Now you can drag the Letter Object with the imbedded Phone List Data Object to a Fax Object. The Fax Object knows what to do with a Letter object that has a Fax Phone number with it. The Fax Object will start up the Fax program and send the letter to the phone number provided.

Each Object can be configured to optimize your computer to the way you work. For example, if you have two fax cards, make a copy of the modem program Object. Configure one for COM1 and the other for COM2. Each program Object is unique and separate. One application can separately and simultaneously run two modems because each Object is unique unto itself. And all this is possible because the 386 and above computers are capable of it.

Programmers who use Smalltalk and C++ must understand the many aspects of imbedded Objects. OOP (Object Oriented Programming) is a buzzword among programmers because a well-defined and written Object can be used over and over again to perform the same functions in different programs. This will, in the long run, greatly reduce the amount of time to write new programs.

One of the major advances in computer applications will be the use of common Objects among many diverse programs. Once you've loaded an application having specific types of Objects, other applications will use these Objects rather than adding their own to your hard drive and, more importantly, take up memory with multiple routines doing the same thing. New operating systems must take advantage of this potential space and time savings capability.

Have you been convinced that an Object is different from an Icon? As you watch demonstrations and read the literature on operating systems and new applications, see if you can spot the trends toward a whole new way of using your computer.

New Members

[INSERT NEWBEE ART HERE]
(No new art this month. bw)

Welcome, new members. We know you made a good investment, becoming part of SLO Bytes. Please let us get to know you better. If you have any comments, suggestions, etc. please see any officer or leave e-mail on our BBS @ 528-6172.

Tom Edell	995-1691
Fred Flanrell	481-6516
James Fogle	
Bob Leonard	733-5176
Bill Wolfe	528-7425

PAPERMASTER

matrix printer – but you probably won't value the results.

According to the box it came in, PaperMaster needs the following:-
- IBM compatible system with 386 or higher processor
- 8MB RAM & 4MB swap file
- Hard disk with 6MB free for software installation
- DOS 3.1 (or higher) and Windows 3.1 or 3.11
- VGA or better monitor
- Any TWAIN or ISIS compliant scanner (handheld, flatbed, or sheetfed)
- Fax modem and software for fax utility
- Printer (Laser quality recommended)

It is dynamic world! I assume that, like many other software development programs, the requirements for PaperMaster continued to evolve during those difficult final moments when the boxes "are already printed" and the product is receiving it's final "tweaks" before shipment. The "User's Guide" says you need 8MB RAM, 8MB of permanent swapfile, and 7MB of free disk space for installation, while the "Readme" file, which appears during installation, agrees with the book except that it says you only need 6MB of free disk space for installation.

The requirements for RAM and swap file size are addressed under "Trouble Shooting" in the "Guide" with the explanation that 4MB is the minimum for a system with only 4MB of RAM but that "8MB is strongly recommended". Industry generally agrees that the performance of Windows 3.1 and 3.11 is greatly improved by increasing RAM from 4 to 8MB even without considering the effect of the large sizes of the image file formats.

None of the above really matters. As discussed below, you will need vastly more space on your hard drive than PaperMaster implies to handle a large number of files under PaperMaster. If you don't have lots of documents, then why are you considering using PaperMaster in the first place? So, given that you require a large hard drive and

lots of RAM to store lots of files under PaperMaster, you won't have a problem setting up a permanent swap file!

Under "Trouble Shooting" on page 50 of the Guide, PaperMaster recommends setting the scanner to 300 dot-per-inch (DPI) resolution for most text documents and from 200 DPI to 400 DPI, or greater, for line drawings and other graphic images. They correctly point out that "higher resolution images not only require more hard disk space for storage, but more RAM for processing".

The "Readme" file which appears during installation tells you that "PaperMaster stores all documents in the TIFF Group 4 compressed file format" and that "The disk space necessary for storing an average letter size page at 300 dpi is 50 - 75 Kbytes (100 pages requires approximately 5 MB of disk space)." Note that file size increases with the square of the dpi setting used, so 400 dpi would require 78 percent more space than 300 dpi, that is 90 - 135 Kbyte per page. Compare this to the 1 or 2 Kbyte required to store a typical text page in ASCII format.

Further elaboration of the hard disk storage requirements is found on page 51 under the heading "Trouble Shooting, Search is unable to locate documents which have the specified word in the document content." Here we learn that the search function uses OCR (Optical Character Recognition) on the document and makes an index from the words found so that "they may be used later for searching". This is the only technical explanation that I found as to how PaperMaster saves documents so I conducted a small test.

As an experiment in file storage requirements, in addition to scanning documents, I imported an existing 17548 byte, nine page, ASCII text file, having a ".TXT" extension, into Microsoft Word 6.0a. I constrained Word to treat it as a "text file" and did not allow it to perform a conversion to the Word format. Since I had already installed the PaperMaster-to-Word macro, I could then simply select "PaperMaster" as the default printer and order Word to print the document – all of this worked just like the "User's Guide" said it would. The macro intercepted the signals which Word was sending to what it thought was the "selected printer" and directed them

through the PaperMaster conversion filter and thence onto the hard drive as PaperMaster files.

After doing this I switched to the Windows File Manager and found that my document had been saved as twenty separate files. Nine of these were ASCII text files and had ".TXT" extensions. Nine more were image files, presumably TIFF files of some type, but without extensions. The remaining two smaller files appeared to be control or header files. It appears that PaperMaster divided the original nine-page text file into chunks of one page each, created a coded "eight plus three" DOS-compatible file name for each page, and saved them in pairs, one as a text file for use in searches and the other as an image file. The twenty files had been placed into a new sub-sub-directory created specifically for that document by PaperMaster. Their total size was 235,352 bytes compared to the original 17,548 byte file I started with – more than a 13-fold increase in size!

The lengths of the first eight ".TXT" files ranged from 2685 to 1458 bytes, typical for an ASCII text page-size file, with the ninth file (a partial last page) having a length of 740 bytes for a total file size of 17,352 bytes. This is very close to the 17,548 byte length of the original file and shows that the original was simply divided into chunks and re-saved. Opening several of the ".TXT" files using Notepad, an ASCII editor, revealed that they were indeed pieces of the original file. These ".TXT" files, if I understand the "User's Guide" correctly, were created for use in searches. If they are good enough for that, then why does PaperMaster also need to store text files as image files and take up so much hard drive space?

Optical Character Recognition software has improved immensely in the last few years. Certainly, when used in conjunction with a quality scanner, the OCR I use daily misses the occasional character and the resulting file must be carefully read and edited to remove errors (spelling checkers help a lot), but the use of OCR allows one to reduce a printed page to a small size ASCII text file without the need to store large ".TIFF" or other image files. This whole process can typically be done more

The Logitech Cordless Radio Mouse—The Search for the Perfect Rodent!

• by Dan Jordan, Buffalo IBM User's Group, January 1993

Back in July I broke down and replaced my $20 mouse. It wasn't broken; I just couldn't stand the damned thing. I work primarily in Windows 3.1 and require complete compatibility and even with updated drivers the cheap rat would hang my system. And the quirks with the mouse driver were just some of the things I disliked about that rodent.

I Hate Meeses to Pieces!

Hence the search for the perfect rodent began. But just what is the perfect mouse? To help define that question I made a list of things I hate about rats.

– conflicts with Windows: Windows is the reason I bought a rat in the first place!
– the mouse pointer goes ballistic with the slightest speed change
– it hurts to hold onto a mouse for any length of time
– the tail (cord) is always getting caught in the piles of stuff on my desk (the "mouse trap syndrome")

Windows Compatibility

Armed with my list of reasons to hate mice I started to sift through the list of rodents that are available for the PC. By insisting on Microsoft Windows 3.1 compatibility first, I was able to cut the field down considerably; with the mouse being such an integral part of a Windows PC, the field of choice was narrowed to major name brand players only. I also wanted to ensure that I could always get updated drivers and support. At this level of mouse systems you are insured a basic level of programmable control over your rodent.

Acceleration Control

The ballistic effect of my $20 mouse was something that always irritated me and I was never able to entirely eliminate the phenomenon. This effect is characterized by the mouse pointer moving across your screen at uncontrollable speeds as you vary the speed of the physical mouse motion. Manufacturers claim that this effect is a feature, designed so you can get to the other side of your screen quicker but I think it a bug, provided so the pointer can fly off the other side of the screen and hide more quickly. I turn this setting (acceleration) off, as I generally need the time to rethink just what I am doing all the way over there anyway. Cursor speed, click and double click rates, and ballistic effects are all standard controls in major player mouse gear, so my number one and two pet mouse peeves are taken care of by sticking to the big names.

Making It All . . . Fit

The third item on my hate list deals with ergonomics and the problems and solutions regarding this will vary from person to person depending on their work area, type of program, and the simple size of their hand. Ideally the perfect pointing device would be of a virtual (not really there) nature: you would just gesture at the monitor and the cursor would obey. The virtual mouse will surely appear before the virtual keyboard, but in the meantime, the next best rodent would be a cordless pressure-sensitive digitizer. On the other hand, have you priced these lately? Personally, I will wait for the price to come down or the virtual mouse to debut before spending that much on a rodent of any kind! Likewise, no manufactures are giving any kind of digitizers out for review so I established a new qualification for my perfect rodent, on the fly: a cost of $100 or less.

So, with my feet on the ground, and my wallet safely in my pocket, I searched through the order rodentia handling each mouse to size it up for comfort. I

PAPERMASTER
Continued from page 6

quickly than would be needed to re-type the page directly into a word processor.

PaperMaster has gone in exactly the opposite direction. It takes small ASCII files and retains them while creating large image files too! Image files are necessary to store drawings and other graphic items on disk, but why store them or create them for text files?

Now we get back to the reason for my cryptic remarks at the beginning of this epistle – and what follows is my personal, highly biased, opinion.

I asked myself: How far should I go in adding my opinion? Should a review strictly hew to the straight and narrow by commenting only on what works and what doesn't, or, should it comment on the caveat-emptor qualities of software which has hidden difficulties, barely hinted at by the manufacturer, and which are likely to cause a new, computer-novice-purchaser trouble in the future. PaperMaster's approach is quite incompatible with any other application of which I am aware. Clearly PaperMaster's advertised "benefits" (find your files easily, etc.) will appeal to novice users more than to experienced users. These users are unlikely to comprehend the difficulties they will face later when they suddenly discover they have run out of hard disk capacity and their bloated files are stored in a highly unusual format, broken into pieces, and are incompatible with any other format!

PaperMaster does what it's manufacturer, DocuMagix, says it does – it does filing chores in a simple way. It is easy to use. It is also easy to see how unsuspecting novice computer users – the obvious intended purchasers –could be deceived by all this seeming simplicity and fail to realize how fast their hard disks are going to be filled and how they are then going to find themselves "boxed-in with no place to go."

PaperMaster is an example of a product with an immediate emotional appeal, particularly to novice users, but which hides a lingering problem likely to bite them later.

FIRST CLASS
Continued from page 4

Fax software. Winfax Pro Version 3.0 for Windows is reasonably well written and not very difficult to work with. You may not even need the latest 4.0 version, since you may never find a need for all of the features that version 3.0 offers. 2. Your computer must be left ON to receive a Fax. With friends that is not a problem. Set up phone signals between your people so that you will know when to turn your computer on to receive a Fax. Business firms (with 800 telephone numbers) will usually Fax you all sorts of information, brochures, etc., within an hour of so, if you explain to them that your computer's Fax/Modem is not always on to receive a Fax. 3. Since Faxes consume a great deal of hard disk storage space, you will find it necessary to make yourself a hard copy of everything you send and receive, and then delete them from your hard drive.

What I consider the worst drawback, I saved for last, namely, Fax/Modem installation and correct software set-up for your system. I do not subscribe to all that nonsense I keep hearing these days, about today's computers being "user-friendly." It is impossible for me to imagine what working with computers must have been like in the early days.

Anyway, since I'm not hardware and software set-up oriented, one of the smartest things I did for myself was having my Fax/Modem and Winfax Pro version 3.0, professionally installed and field tested in my presence. It sure made things easier for me. My job was simply learning to use the software. That was not unpleasant; just a little frustrating at times. However, you should keep in mind that you can always turn to any of our Club communication gurus for set-up help, guidance, and whatever. The little I know about computer communications was gleaned from reading books dealing only with the basics, and intended for the novices.

Hopefully this article will inspire more of our club members to try Faxing, since I assume nearly everyone in our club already knows the basics of using a regular modem. Why not try Faxing? You may even like it! It is inexpensive, fast and reliable.

MOUSE
Continued from page 7

eliminated track balls almost immediately due to the amount of time I spend rat-handling: with a track ball the fingers must be bent in an unnatural position and held there for constant control, and this position ultimately causes a great deal of wrist and finger strain.

The next rodent to catch my eye was the mouse pen. Pen mice attempt to simulate the feel of a Flair felt-tip pen with varying degrees of success but the tail (control wire to serial port) gives them the feel of a the cheapo pen chained to the table at the bank. Irritating. And another seemingly good rodent idea bites the dust.

What can one do about the regular ol' mouse to make it more comfortable to hold? For insight into this problem I looked to the mouse-pioneering (1984) Macintosh and its users. Surely by now there would be a whole passel of perfect rodents to use on the Mac!

Not!

Mac users basically have the same old one-button mouse they started with, though now some PC mouse manufacturers are migrating their products to the Mac scene. (Sort of reminded me of Henry Ford's promise of any car color you wanted, so long as you wanted black.) There are mouse covers for Mac-mice, ingenious devices that merely snap on to a standard Mac mouse, giving a larger and somewhat more ergonomic design. The idea is a good one for a closed market such as the Macintosh's, but on the PC side of the street, there are several manufactures and styles to choose from, making a uniform "cover" impossible as well as unnecessary (why cover? redesign!). On the other hand, the idea that the size of the mouse might be a factor in comfort brought me to the Logitech Cordless Radio Mouse.

Radio Killed the Wired Mouse Stars

The Radio is large; looks like a mouse on steroids, frankly. Stuffed inside the Radio Mouse is a three-volt lithium battery that takes up a fair amount of room; next to the battery is a seven-eighths inch diameter ball that provides positive cursor movement. The marvel

that gets rid of the rat tail (and with no tail to get caught in the various traps of work piled on my desk, this mouse was off and running!), the very heart of the Radio Mouse, is an eight channel programmable transmitter, that can signal a receiver (a "mouse box") up to one meter (39 inches) away.

The mouse box connects to a serial port, and has an eight-pole rotary switch to tune into the channel the mouse itself is on. The missing tail from the mouse turns out not to have been eliminated entirely, rather it has been moved to the mouse house, enabling it to be moved around to find the best location for reception. Right off, I noticed that placing the mouse box under the monitor or on the computer case itself may cause erratic results. The boxtail is also one meter long, so the choice of location is broad indeed.

To program the mouse transmitter channel, you flip the Radio Mouse on its back and open the door in its belly. The door provides access to the control ball and the battery, but when this door is half way open, a green light will flash out a numerical code telling you what channel the mouse is programmed to! By clicking the left mouse button you move the channel setting "up" one setting for each click of the button. This is actually quite easy to do, as my two year old daughter Hannah can attest, for she has reprogrammed the mouse on two different occasions when it wasn't put away in a childproof location.

To install the mouse software, I first deleted the contents of my c:\mouse directory and installed the Logitech drivers (no problem); then I ran the win3ins.exe program supplied with the rodent. This program reconfigures Windows to use the Radio Mouse. The next order of business was to run mtest.exe to adjust the mouse speed, click and double click rates, and to turn off the ballistic setting. Windows has since performed without any of the mouse-related problems that I was experiencing before.

In fact, there have been only three situations in which the mouse has not performed properly, or the software failed to load:

When the mouse box is blocked by the CPU or monitor from communicating

MOUSE
Continued from page 8

with the mouse (solution: move the box)

When the mouse itself is in a child proof location that is over a meter from the mouse box (solution: bring it back)

When Hannah has reprogrammed the mouse transmitter frequency (solution: secure the mouse better)

I must admit that I had serious concerns about the reliability of radio control on a peripheral, what with all the potential for interference. But when I went to Computer City, the salesman told me that if my concerns about interference were realized, I could return the Radio Rodent for a refund. So far, it has remained on my desk. In an office environment, of course, the potential for interference is magnified, but with eight different channels to choose from an effective broadcasting radius of one meter, Logitech has gone to some lengths to ensure that there would be no interference from neighboring rodents in a work group.

Conclusion

The Radio Mouse is quite literally a handful, but this is not necessarily bad. The feel is comfortable, with the mouse buttons placed far enough away from the body to let the fingers lay comfortably along the ratback. It has solved my Windows compatibility problems and the lack of a tail is a definite plus. I think I've successfully concluded my search for the perfect $100 rodent.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Logitech has since come out with a second generation radio controlled mouse. More ergonomic, it fits the hand and takes two AAA batteries. The older version is large and the replacement battery costs $5-$7. I have one of each two feet apart. They do not interfere with each other as the frequencies can be changed with dip switches. My radio receivers are somewhere under a pile of papers. I haven't seen them for months, but it doesn't seem to matter. I wouldn't buy another cord mouse again. I prefer "tailless" mice... on computers anyway. –Bob Ward

Treasurer's Report

SLO Bytes PCUG
Expenditures July, 1995

Beg. Checking Bal. .... + 1207.04

Expenses:
Newsletter 07/95 .... -	129.18
BBS Phone Bill 7/95 .... -	10.64
Long Dist. Chgs .... -	31.76
BBS 28.8 BPS Modem ...... -	199.99
-	371.57

Deposit 08/08/95 .... + 415.00

New Balance .... + **1250.47**

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Membership: Dues are $25 per year. Newsletter only is $16 per year. Full membership entitles you to our monthly newsletter, full use of the public domain software library and discounts at local computer stores.
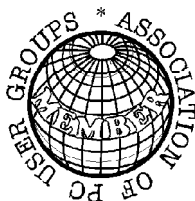
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(don't know if I want to claim credit for the great graphics this month. bw)

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PC Files (9,000+) and Message Section

Meeting Times

General meetings are held the 1st Sunday of every month, unless noted otherwise in the newsletter calendar, at 2:45 pm in the Cal Poly University Biology Department, Fisher Hall 286.

Special Interest Groups (SIGS) meet at 1:00–2:30 pm.
General Information SIG: Fisher Hall 286
New computer user SIG: Fisher Hall 289
Windows SIG: Fisher Hall 287

Floppy Disks 4-Sale at the meeting

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