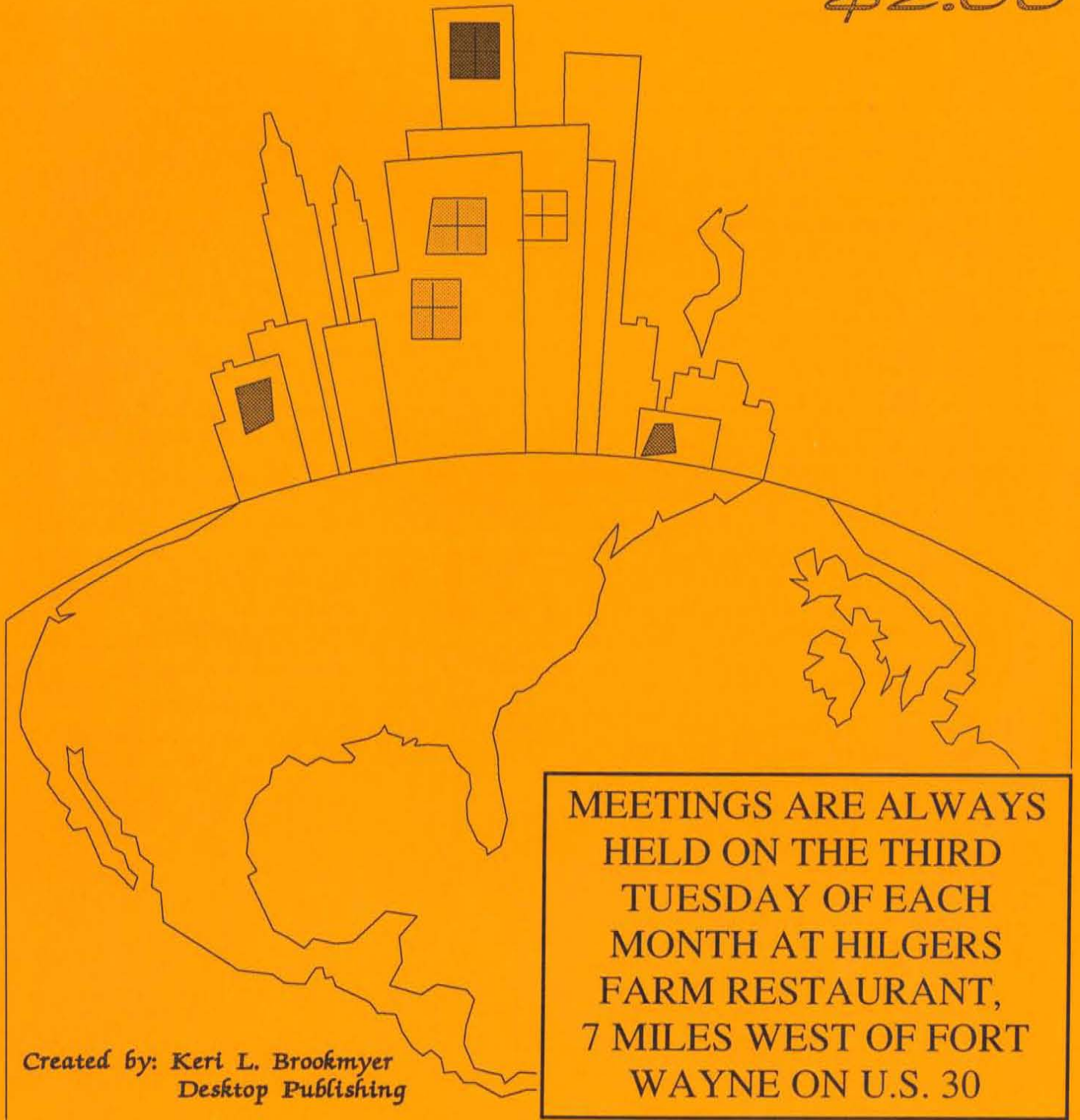


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The Extended Office: Toward Communications-Centric Computing in the 1990s

by Mark Eppley

The 1980s will be remembered as the era of the desktop computer. This decade marked the emergence of truly personal computing. Since the IBM PC was introduced in 1981, more than 60 million personal computers have been sold.

The 1980s were a time when early software applications such as spreadsheets and word processing dramatically changed the way some office workers performed their jobs. Ten years later, word processors have virtually replaced the IBM Selectric typewriter. Spreadsheets, once the province of accountants and bookkeepers, are now used by millions of others for everything from balancing their checkbooks to analyzing departmental budgets.

In a word, just as the previous two decades had their unique computing flavor -- the 1960s were the decade of batch processing and the 1970s were the decade of time sharing -- the 1980s were the decade of the desktop. The applications and the functionality of computers shifted dramatically to a "desktop centric" paradigm.

Computer users shifted from specialists or experts to individuals. Computing became an independent function as opposed to a dependent function during the time-sharing 1970s. In the 1980s, individuals were empowered to perform tasks not possible previously, such as sophisticated desktop publishing. Computers also became easier to use with the emergence of graphical user interfaces (GUI) and pointing devices such as the mouse.

But the 1980s also closed with a glimpse of what the 1990s will offer -- a paradigm unlike any of the previous three, a communications-centric paradigm in which computers will be seen less as task-oriented tools and more as communications tools. Users will do less word processing and spreadsheeting than communicating. The 1990s promise to be a time when advances in technology and miniaturization will indeed lead to the ubiquitous computer. As Mark Weiser, head of Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center Computer Science Laboratory, wrote recently in *Scientific American*, "The most profound technologies are those that disappear."

What he meant is that the most significant technologies, such as the telephone, are transparent to the user because they become so matter-of-fact that they are assimilated into everyday life. The 1990s will see the emergence of computers that are viewed in this way. Computers will be used much more like telephones are -- necessary tools we use daily without giving them a second thought. Computers will not be thought of the way we think of them today.

The Emergence of the Extended Office

The extended office will give rise to a new way of using computers, one that will allow users to have a computer device with them at all times. The emergence of the extended office will require the confluence of a number of technologies, not the least of which will deal with moving

information from one place to another by a variety of channels, many of which are not commonly used today.

The key to the communications-centric computers of the 1990s will be miniaturization and portability. By the end of the decade, many workers will own several computers that perform various specialized functions. But, unlike previous computing paradigms, the 1990s will be an era when all of these devices from the smallest hand-held "pad" to a powerful desktop workstation will be networked, allowing instant access to information.

What will fuel this revolution? Pen-based computing, voice recognition technologies, lower priced and better color flat-panel displays, smaller and higher capacity mass storage devices and expanded wide area and local area linking technologies all will play key roles in the computer environment of the future. Products such as a PC companion or personal communicator will be commonplace within 10 years. These will be small computers, some without keyboards, that will go anywhere, connecting to other computers and networks via radio, cellular and telephone lines to send and receive information.

The computer will emerge from its task orientation (desktop-centric), becoming communications-centric. This will require immediate and constant access not only to the small portable device that will accompany workers wherever they go, but also to channels of communications that will be different than the traditional

wire-based mode of computer communications today -- the telephone system.

The Need for No-Penalty Portability

By the end of this decade, if the communications-centric computer model is to be truly realized, many problems remain to be solved -- both hardware and software. Today's software isn't intuitive enough and today's computing platforms aren't compact and powerful enough to realize this dream. Because users want it all, they demand the same functionality they get on their desktop machine. But in reality they will need more functionality to deal with the complexities of a communications-centric environment. Despite the advances made in recent

years in the areas of portability and communications, users still pay heavy penalties for a portable environment.

Future channels of communications used by computers will likely include not only traditional wires, but waves -- radio frequencies, satellite transmissions, wireless networks, cellular and microwave. Software and hardware developers face new challenges in creating products that will prosper in this communications-centric environment of the 1990s.

Hardware connections will gradually be supplanted as computers send messages and retrieve information through the air. Users won't have to look for a telephone jack to connect to their office network or

retrieve information from a remote source. They may just bounce a signal off a satellite. This confluence of technology in the 1990s will have an impact greater than anything in the previous history of personal computing.

The kinds of tasks computers are used for will change as well, due to the portability, power and increased intelligence of computing devices, many of which may be more familiarly recognized as retrieval appliances. Today's e-mail will give way to richer, more graphical, forms of messaging that will extend far beyond today's text messaging. Vast amounts of information will be available virtually instantly and with little or no effort required from the user. Software will be intelligent enough to learn and anticipate

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how its user works. Multimedia technology will become the rule rather than the exception.

While some of these tasks are possible today using portable and notebook computers, their use is not without penalty. Users cannot easily move information using a wide variety of channels. Portable linking is possible, but complicated and time-consuming. Sneaker-net or package express are common methods of moving information because of the complexities of remote linking.

Because using today's portable machines and linking them with other computers and networks is complex, users of portables, notebooks and palmtops have been the early adopters and power users, but not the novices. Portable users have been willing to shoulder a special burden, to pay a price for portability. However, if the 1990s are to be the decade of the ubiquitous computer, the rules will have to change. The penalties of using today's portable computers must give way to no-penalty portability.

Intelligent Linking Technology: The Missing Piece

As with every paradigm shift, none of this will be possible without development of a number of critical enabling technologies, most of which will be transparent to users. To realize this vision of no-penalty portability, the linking technology must become vastly more intelligent. The process of linking one computer to another today is not a task for the uninitiated. Add to that the need to do the linking over new channels and the task is vastly complicated.

Soon we will be dealing with a much broader spectrum of plat-

forms than those used today. And these computing devices will rely on an increasingly complex network of channels to link together and move information. This daunting problem of multiple platforms and the plumbing to hook them together suddenly takes on new dimensions.

The communications-centric computing of the 1990s calls for intelligent linking technology that can deal with this emerging tangle of platforms and plumbing, automatically sensing changes in its environment that the user cannot possibly anticipate. This technology will need not only to recognize the linking environment it is in, but be able to select the best, fastest and most dependable route for linking and know all the associated technical information and protocols needed to make it successful.

The task is one that demands a standard, flexible interface by which all hardware and software can address these complex linking issues -- a universal communications object (UCO) or piece of code that can be plugged into hardware and software to provide the critical linking services that will be required for the computing environment of the 1990s. The challenge is one of not only accommodating the diversity of platforms and channels of communications, but doing it within the framework of today's standards.

For the past three years, we at Traveling Software have been working on just such a technology -- one that can live within today's network standards, but is intelligent enough to adapt to the sophisticated linking environments of the decade ahead. Like a Lego block, this universal communications object is a consistent, independent module that can be plugged into any software application and provide a service. It will act like the gatekeeper, pump and channeler -- all at one time and with

a great deal of intelligence about its environment.

To be successful, the UCO must be able to:

- * Recognize the hardware on which it is running and optimize the transfer for that system;
- * Recognize the connections of the computer and inform the application;
- * Re-establish connections automatically if the connection is broken during transmission without user intervention;
- * Execute file transfer and printer redirection at the same time and with multiple connection capabilities; and
- * Provide platform independence, including OS/2, UNIX, Windows and DOS environments.

The creation of this UCO offers a means to solve what will soon be recognized as a major problem in the move to a communications-centric computing environment. It addresses many of the issues that penalized users of remote computers. But while this technology is a solution for today, it also is the foundation for tomorrow's growing needs for intelligent remote linking. At Traveling Software, we are committed to solving and creating the solutions and products to solve today's and tomorrow's mobile connectivity requirements.

Mark Eppley is Chairman and CEO of Traveling Software Inc. (TSI) of Bothell, Washington. Mark founded Traveling Software in 1982 to meet what he perceived as the increasing need to provide tools -- both hardware and software -- to enable the portable computer user.

Windows Inside a Window

by Olaf Meding, Madison PC User's Group

Are you a victim of the LDE (Load, Do something, Exit) cycle with plenty of W (Wait) in between? Can you afford to wait for your computer to do LDE and W each time you need to switch between programs? Don't you agree it is time to forget about LDE and W and get your work done more efficiently? Read on to find out how you can become more productive.

Desqview 386 consists of the regular Desqview program and QEMM. Both products are also sold separately. Desqview is a multitasking environment allowing the user to run many programs simultaneously. QEMM (Quarterdeck Expanded Memory Manager) manages all memory on IBM personal computers or compatibles (PCs) equipped with an Intel 80386/486-type microprocessor. Manifest (bundled with QEMM) is a memory analysis and reporting tool and can tell you more about your computer than you would ever care to know. Desqview 386 also contains utility programs, which further squeeze the last bit of memory out of your computer if you suffer from severe RAM cram (loss of memory).

Desqview

Desqview runs on any PC-compatible computer from the 8086/88-type microprocessor and up. Desqview uses windows and supports a mouse, much like Microsoft Windows does. The largest single difference between the two is the user interface -- Microsoft Windows uses a graphical user interface (GUI) and Desqview is text or character based (please see side bar).

The Desqview 386 install procedure searches your entire hard disk for applications it recognizes. The setup for the 140 most common programs is predefined. These programs, if present on your hard disk, are automatically installed by the Desqview setup procedure. Later, you can easily add more programs. Installing a program consists of creating an entry in the "Open Window" menu. By creating this entry, you tell Desqview in what subdirectory the new program resides and some details such as the amount of memory the program is allowed to use. In most cases, you just accept the suggested default values.

Once all programs are installed all you have to do is hit the "Desqview Key" (Alt key) to get Desqview's main menu. From this menu you point and shoot (highlight and hit enter if you don't have a mouse). The main menu lets you launch a program, switch between programs, close a program, rearrange windows, and transfer data between programs (very useful!). Online help is also available.

Going back in history, DOS (disk operating system used in PCs) was created over 10 years ago. It was designed as a single-user, single-task operating system. TSR (terminate and stay resident) programs were the first generation of programs to bring limited multitasking to DOS. "Outside In," reviewed in the September 1991 Bits & PC's, is a good example of a typical TSR program.

Later, task-switching programs, such as Software Carousel and the new DOS 5.0 shell were able to load

multiple programs and switch between them. However, as with TSRs, only a single program can run at a time. Desqview, which has been around since 1985, was one of the first programs to bring true multitasking to the DOS world.

Desqview is a true multitasking environment. It lets you have several programs open at the same time. You can even watch several programs executing simultaneously through overlapping or tiled windows.

A program continues to run in the background when you switch away from it to another program. The application you are currently working on is referred to as the program running in the foreground. You can have a spreadsheet crunching numbers, a communications program downloading your E-mail, DOS formatting floppy disks, and a word processor all running simultaneously -- side by side.

If you run out of memory, Desqview swaps a program out to your hard disk or to a RAM disk. When that happens, it stops the program from running (freezes its window), but the program continues to run as soon as you go back to it.

Of course, the program in the foreground is always running. However, programs in the background may or may not run. As mentioned before, swapping a program to disk is one reason why a program stops running in the background.

Most DOS programs were written (and unfortunately are still being written) on the assumption that they

"own" all resources, such as screen access, keyboard, communication ports, etc. Programs which write directly to the screen without asking DOS or the BIOS (basic input output system) are a good example of what is commonly named a misbehaved program. They are called misbehaved because they may write into a window possibly "owned" by another program. (Graphics programs always write directly to the screen, but are usually not considered misbehaved.)

On an 8086/88-type processor, Desqview has no way of preventing a program from writing directly to the screen, so Desqview simply stops these programs from running in the background.

On an 80286-type processor, a special "loader" prevents programs

from directly messing with the screen, so that they can be run in the background. A loader has to be specifically written for a given application. Quarterdeck provides nine loader programs for applications such as Microsoft Windows and AutoCad.

However, the hardware inside an 80386-type processor makes it possible for Desqview to run even the so-called misbehaved and graphics programs in the background. The only exception is graphics software which switches the 80386 into protected mode.

The parameters for each program are set up by "Change Program" and are stored in a PIF (Program Information File). One parameter, the "Runs in Background" option, lets you specify if a program can be

swapped to the hard disk in order to make room for loading other programs. For example, a word processor can be set to "yes" because once you switch to another program, your word processor will be idle anyway. On the other hand, a communications program must be set to "no" because it needs to respond to the telephone line as soon as data comes in.

Another time-saving feature is the keyboard macro or "learn" feature. The learn feature learns a sequence of keystrokes and assigns these keystrokes to a single key or sequence of keys. Each Desqview window has its own set of keyboard macros. For example, you can assign arcane DOS commands, such as "format b:t:80/n:9" to a DOS window or repetitive keystrokes (such as your



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address) in the WordPerfect window, to any key or key combination.

One nice touch of the Change Program feature is that it can be changed on the fly, i.e., without restarting Desqview. For example, just change the allocation of memory and restart the program.

Desqview lets you run multiple copies of the same program. A good example is the DOS window, which provides you with the familiar DOS "C:\>" prompt. So if you don't have the time or the need to customize a program's PIF, just open a DOS window and run the program exactly like you would from the DOS prompt you are presently using (without Desqview).

Novice DOS users will find Desqview's point and shoot approach to launch application software much easier to use than the DOS prompt. Furthermore, the "DOS Services" menu provides many DOS commands such as directory listings (DIR) and change directory (CD).

In addition, hitting the Alt key twice switches you to the next program. If you have only two open windows, this is a very fast and convenient way of switching between the two programs -- one window for the actual program and the other window to view the documentation file.

Desqview itself is text based, but it does support graphics. In fact, you can even run Microsoft Windows inside Desqview and enjoy the best of both worlds. Microsoft Windows itself becomes a window running in the background.

Desqview and Microsoft Windows

Microsoft Windows 3.0 (Windows) has three modes of operation: real, standard, and enhanced mode. Real mode runs on any Intel 80x86 proc-

essor, standard mode needs at least an 80286, and enhanced mode requires at least an 80386-type processor. While Windows is also a multitasking environment, programs need to be specifically written for it.

Both the real mode and the standard mode only allow you to run a single DOS program at a time. All other programs stop running while the DOS program is in the foreground (active window).

However, the enhanced mode allows you to run multiple DOS programs simultaneously. Desqview does not support the enhanced mode of Microsoft Windows. Quarterdeck argues that the enhanced mode is not needed because you would use Desqview (and not Windows) to run multiple DOS programs.

QEMM

QEMM, Quarterdeck's Expanded Memory Manager, will manage all memory available on IBM personal computers and compatibles (PCs) which utilize at least an 80386-type microprocessor. Please refer to the "PC Memory Tutorial" for a detailed description of the various PC memory types and abbreviations.

QEMM is installed as part of the Desqview 386 install procedure. The install procedure includes running "Optimize." Optimize reboots your computer several times to find the optimum sequence and location for loading device drivers and TSRs into high memory.

QEMM converts all of your extended memory into XMS and/or expanded memory. XMS memory consists of three different types: extended, UMB, and HMA memory.

Expanded memory speeds up many programs which support it, e.g., WordPerfect and PC-Kwik. Ex-

tended memory is needed by many protected mode programs such as Microsoft Windows and Paradox.

DOS 5.0 and Desqview are examples of two programs which can load part of their code into HMA memory. This leaves more conventional memory behind for other programs to use.

Depending on the PC hardware, QEMM creates up to 211 KB of high memory without using conventional memory. This is enough to load high a large network driver, mouse driver, and all your favorite TSRs. After all drivers and TSRs are loaded high, QEMM leaves behind about 620 KB of conventional memory, which stimulates even the most memory-hungry programs to run at full speed.

The sophisticated methods used by QEMM distinguish it from many of its competitors. Quarterdeck calls its latest innovation the "stealth technology." The stealth technology hides ROM and the EMS page frame and puts these memory areas back in place when needed. The stealth technology, introduced with QEMM 6.0, frees up an additional 20 to 115 KB of high memory.

DEVICEHI and LOADHI are the QEMM equivalent of DOS' DEVICEHIGH and LOADHIGH. Both sets of programs are used to load device drivers and TSRs into high memory. If you are familiar with LOADHIGH and DEVICEHIGH, you know how much of a pain it is to work with these clumsy DOS tools. Waste of your precious time (in days) and valuable PC memory (in hundreds of KB) are the result of messing with these DOS memory management tools.

DEVICEHI and LOADHI on the other side, are automatically activated by the optimize program. Both programs use another Quarter-

deck innovation called "squeeze" to supply additional memory at startup time. DEVICEHIGH and LOADHIGH (supplied with DOS) might not be able to load programs with additional memory requirements at startup, even though they would fit into high memory after initialization.

Every PC is built a little differently. There are no standards for PC manufacturers on how the UMB area should be used for BIOS ROM, hard disk cards, network adapters, video cards, etc. As a result, QEMM has to be able to detect adapter card RAM and ROM on its own and create high RAM in unused areas. QEMM's "analyze" feature is a great help for the user if QEMM is not able to automatically detect all ROM.

HIMEM and EMM386 are two device drivers needed to run Microsoft Windows. QEMM not only replaces HIMEM and EMM386, but also supplies more conventional and high memory and has many more sophisticated features than the two combined. QEMM is fully compatible with Microsoft Windows in all three modes and with all current industry standards, i.e., EMS 3.2, EEMS, EMS 4.0, XMS, and VCPI.

Yet another way QEMM can speed up any 80386 computer is by shadowing the BIOS and other ROM areas. Not all 80386 computers have built-in hardware support to shadow ROM. The 80386 hardware makes it possible to copy the much slower ROM into faster RAM and then map this RAM back into the same memory space occupied by the ROM. This technique is called shadowing. Depending on how many BIOS calls a program makes, shadowing can speed up program execution significantly.

QEMM is a must-have program if you use Desqview, Microsoft Win-

dows, TSRs, network drivers, and any program that runs faster the more memory it gets. Examples of memory-hungry programs include most databases and spreadsheets, WordPerfect, AutoCad, programming language compilers, etc.

Documentation

The casual user will not need to read the documentation in order to utilize the power of Desqview 386. The setup program guides you through all steps. No computer knowledge is assumed -- the suggested defaults work well in most cases. The online help will answer many common questions after Desqview is installed. All manuals have a well-organized index.

However, the technical or curious user will find that the three manuals of Desqview 386 are a true gold mine. These three manuals are for Desqview, QEMM, and Manifest, respectively, and are a great resource to help you better understand the DOS jungle. For example, if you want to explore the maze of PC memory, study the Desqview 386 documentation. I have not yet seen a more thorough treatment of the various PC memory types, specifically expanded memory.

Quarterdeck's history of innovations in PC memory management and DOS multitasking continues with the latest release of Desqview 386. Desqview 386 gives you the capability your computer was designed for -- multitasking. Both QEMM version 6.0 and Desqview 2.4 take full advantage of the power of 80386 and better type micro processors. Be more productive and forget the LDE and W cycles. If you own an older version of Desqview, upgrade. Else, put Desqview 386 on the top of your shopping list.

For more information, call: Quarterdeck Office Systems 150 Pico Blvd. Santa Monica, CA 90405 (213) 392-9701

Text versus the Graphical User Interface (GUI)

Text-mode means that your monitor is divided into characters. For example 25 rows and 80 columns of characters is very common.

Graphics-mode means that your monitor is divided into pixels (picture elements). Special graphics hardware, such as Hercules graphics for monochrome or VGA (Video Graphics Array) for color, is needed to display graphical images. For example, the very common VGA standard divides your screen into 480 rows and 640 columns of pixels.

The GUI (graphical user interface) of Microsoft Windows is nice because of its appearance. But a GUI is very slow because it has to keep track of many (480x640) pixels as opposed to few (25x80) characters. Another disadvantage of a GUI is that it requires expensive graphics hardware (graphics card, monitor, and a mouse).

What a huge package! Jump Start, Getting Started, Draw, Graph,

Word 2.0 for Windows

by Phil Saunders, Madison PC User's Group

Equation Editor, and finally the massive 811-page Word for Windows itself greet you before you begin to load. Using Word Basic, the macro language guide, is promised by January 1992. Also enclosed are Alki Software ads for a 600,000-word thesaurus; 74,100-word legal, medical and business speller; a Word-specific tool/macro package; and your choices of 13 Word Proofing Toolkits in such esoteric languages as British English. Sorry, the Finnish and Portuguese versions offer no synonyms.

Word 2.0 is packaged on six 3.5" or seven 5.25" high-density -- hooray -- disks. Decompressed and in full issue, Word 2.0 threatens to take up 15 MB of hard disk space. In actuality, with no modifications, it was closer to 12, loading on a 386/25 with 19ns IDE hard disk in just under 33 minutes. Conversion utilities, help, and tutorials are a large part. The Object Linking and Embedding (not related to single's bars) takes space, too, but this one is hard to give up -- you have the abilities of Excel, Paintbrush, and PowerPoint's graphs right in the document, simply by clicking on the picture, for example. Later, loading the word processor without options took under 2 MB.

Other special features include the select-and-drop special character feature which allows inserting any symbol or dingbat, for example, without having to change fonts. Cut and paste is easy with the ability to highlight a block of text and simply click and drag it to where you would like it to be.

So many magazines have devoted so much time to praising Word in its newest incarnation that I'd like to offer the approach of a Word Perfect 5.1 aficionado who still isn't sure why people like Windows.

One of my complaints about Word 1.1 was the need to go through two or three layers of menu, dialogue box, ellipsed choices requiring more layers, etc., to access simple commands. At least in WP, layered commands can be negotiated speedily through pull-down menus. Now, Word commands are far more accessible and the toolbar can be reconfigured to meet specific needs. More on that later.

In the rush to match WordPerfect for Windows and, possibly, to be available for Christmas, Microsoft released Word 2.0 with a number of bugs:

- * It adds an extra paragraph character in templates, causing the sentence to break.
- * The spell checker contains misspellings and fails to catch other misspellings.
- * Margins suddenly revert to default values.
- * Headers and footers disappear.
- * TIFF files print as large blotches of ink.
- * Files don't appear on screen.
- * Fonts become halved or disappear when zooming in on them at 200 percent.

* Text suddenly appears in two-column format.

* Pasted text loses formatting.

* Will not create WordPerfect-format files, although it claims it will.

* Not a bug per se, but columns can not be of unequal width.

* Also not bug, but why must it take three openings of View to delete the Ribbon, Ruler, and Toolbar?

Jon Reingold, Group Product Manager at Microsoft, in Redmond, WA, says "a maintenance release is expected to ship in the first quarter." Mike Maples, Senior Vice President of Applications notes "We have a rigorous [categorizing] system at Microsoft for addressing bugs (said addresses perhaps noted in the FAT?), where we assign numbers ranging from a one, for those that cause crashes, to a four, for those that affect appearance or unusual configurations." Boni Weis, Milwaukee Microsoft Representative, admitted she didn't know how to identify the bar codes included in the symbols package, and suggested that errors while saving in other formats -- such as WP5.1 -- be reported to the "Push Team" which is addressing this and other matters.

Whine, whine, whine. With that out of the way, I have to admit this is a great product! It offers the same old Windows-familiar editing capabilities that are sort of the reverse of WordPerfect's: it's easier to format after entering the text. I wanted to write this article in Word and save it as a WP-formatted document so it could be read as such by our trusty

editor, but, as mentioned, the codes aren't working. Would you believe the WP spell checker doesn't recognize Redmond or Microsoft?

Mail merge is one of the things they really got right. Click on the toolbar and do it: opening the secondary file isn't even necessary. Preview has errors? Fix it as is, restart with two clicks, and you're running. No need to go back to originals. The ability to edit as is makes the OLE top shelf, too. Whether it is one of the included MS applications mentioned earlier, or Excel, or dBase, double-clicking on the object allows opening the object immediately for editing. Movement and resizing is possible with only click and drag.

Words style capabilities are limitless and easier to use than anyone else's. They are also remarkably easy to edit once you've seen it. On that same note, margins and columns can be resized in the preview mode without having to return to the edit screen.

Word carries all the familiar reference tools for the esoteric and arcane. Footnotes, endnotes, outlines, indices and tables of contents are all relatively easy to perform, should you be stuck with a dissertation. The table of contents can be generated by an enclosed macro, which should be easier to edit once the promised Using Word Basic manual arrives. The macros are powerful and have an easier language than in WP. My brief perusal impressed me, but made me want to wait for the promised further documentation. Love those tables! Point, click, drag. No guessing, no assuming, no endless shifts between edit and view screens.

Word can successfully import: WordPerfect 4.1-5.1, ASCII, DCA/RFT, MS RTF, WordStar to 5.5, dBase III & IV, MS Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, and Word for Mac. Ami

Pro conversion is available free, but separately. In graphics, Word will import Windows Metafiles (WMF), WordPerfect graphics (WPG), PC Paintbrush (PCX), TIFF files (TIF), and AutoCad files (DXF and PLT), HPGL, CGM, DRW, BMP, and Encapsulated PostScript (EPS). I can personally vouch for WP, ASCII, WPG and BMP; I have not heard of other import problems. On the export side, I tried exporting a simple word document with no fancy formatting. It had to be stripped in DOS to be able to be opened in WP. I then tried the back door method of importing a WP document into Word, editing, and exporting. While Word flawlessly imported, preserving italic text and formatting, when the document was exported, it reopened readily in WP, but with no trace of the editing done in Word.

Speed is terrible! I admit to being a DOS/WP user, but I thought all the rage about Windows was multitasking: shouldn't that include my printer? With the memory size and CPU speed I have, plus a permanent swap file, it just shouldn't take this long. The ease of composing and changing a document is frustrated by the interminable wait for the page. The fonts are barely satisfactory, but tend to stair-step and jag in anything over 14 points.

The learning curve is gentle, especially for would-be converts. Word is begging to be your word processor. Of course I installed the included, new, trumpeted WordPerfect help, and it is very good. It misses some of the more esoteric keystrokes, such as Shift-F3 to change from upper to lower case on block text, thinking you want a second document (plain F3). But it mostly does what you want it to and tells you the corresponding Word keystrokes during execution. Can't believe this will halt the

creeping Alzheimer's prevalent amongst techies.

The help is plentiful, and there is a tutorial that has improved in several ways. It has a control panel clearly present, allowing exit once you realize "yeah, that's it," without forcing you to complete the exercise. It also has a prompt key for those uninspired moments, helping you get smoothly into the exercises. It is mostly on basic or mid-level skills though, not delving into complex applications, and it doesn't include the OLE packages, Draw, Graph, and Equation Editor. In fairness, these have their own texts. Finally, when loading Excel 3.0 for the first time, you are given a watch-only demo that is fun, interesting, and makes you want to explore this, that, and the other. With all the space Word is grabbing, they should have included what I thought was a charming and encouraging introduction to their spreadsheet. The tutorial will probably get unloaded after a couple of months.

Some of the other features I like are the ability to curve text, customize the toolbar, easy "real" quotes, reverse printing, zoom, and readouts of what you're doing. True, text can only do full and semicircles, but it's a start. With the Toolbar customized toward publishing, for example, you could select most-used commands and save them as a template. "Real" quotes, like all symbols, are readily available from the ribbon, and can be cut and pasted anywhere in a document without the tedium of changing fonts twice. It's also easy to see what is available on the screen, instead of having to refer to a manual or table.

Reverse printing allows last page first, producing a correctly ordered stack in your output tray. Zoom allows gradation of edit screen size up or down in one-degree increments: I find the screen easier to see

and work with at 127 percent. Finally, the lower portion of the screen shows you what a proposed menu item will do. You may not always understand what it means, but more often you will.

This is more word processor than I need, but then, so is WordPerfect. Once Microsoft fixes the objections mentioned earlier, this could be a real threat to Ventura and Page-maker. I'm sure fixing Word is a big priority at Microsoft, from my talk with Boni Weis in Milwaukee. Listed at \$495 retail, and \$299 at Egghead, it is available as a \$129 upgrade to owners of Word for Windows 1.1, Word for DOS, any WordPerfect, WordStar, Multi-Mate, or DisplayWrite.

Microsoft Corporation One Microsoft Way Redmond, WA 98052 (206) 882-8080

**User Groups:
Providing
"Information at
Your Fingertips"
by Bill Gates**

In Ten years, the personal computer has evolved very rapidly -- from an interesting technical niche to the center of personal productivity in many businesses. In the next ten years, it will evolve into an information appliance that spans the office, the traveling worker, and the home. All applications will be inherently "groupware," with the work of many individuals becoming tightly integrated; at the same time, individuals will have the flexibility to travel and work off-line and plug in as necessary. Applications themselves will have many interchangeable parts. The computer workday will focus not on the applications

being loaded but on the documents themselves that users want to create.

We at Microsoft call this vision of the future "Information at Your Fingertips." It's the idea that people will be able to treat all data, whether local or remote, whether text or graphics or sound or video, as just data; or perhaps more appropriately, as information -- data that can be usefully manipulated, evaluated, analyzed, organized, and ultimately, made sense of and acted upon. This vision also assumes that applications become more content-oriented. Today's applications are mostly tools -- word processors let you create documents, spreadsheets let you calculate figures, but you have to supply the words and figures yourself. "Content" applications will be rich in data of many types, focusing on education, training, entertainment -- certainly there will be a cross-over between the PC and current game software, only with much greater sophistication.

Two interesting things will happen: The PC will become the central window through which employees will access worldwide corporate data, and the PC will also become more personal. More corporate and more personal at the same time? Yes. Ease of use and intuitive behavior are a necessity for any product going into the home; they are also a necessity to create order out of the huge mass of corporate data confronting people at work.

How do we get there from here?

First, microprocessor technology must continue to advance, as it has, at a fairly constant rate. (Over the last decade, a doubling of power every two years or so has been realized.) There is every reason to believe this will continue. For example, in 1986, the 16 MHz 80386 was state-of-the-art. After two years, the speed was up to 33

MHz. In 1989, the 80486 was introduced, with more processing power and a clock speed of 25 MHz -- and 50 MHz versions were introduced in 1991. By the end of 1992, the new Intel chip and the MIPS R4000 chip will more than double processing power and speed again. PC systems will have gone from less than 1 MIPS (Millions-of-Instructions-Per-Second) of computing power a few years ago, to more than 50 MIPS on the desktop.

Similar advances are occurring in related areas of technology. Within a few years, desktop screens will handle 2048x2048 resolution; notepad-sized machines will be at 1280x1024; and wallet-sized PCs will have displays comparable to the 640x480 standard of today. Soon there will be low-cost, small form-factor 400 MB hard drives. Cheap, removable optical storage devices will provide even greater storage. Wireless networks will provide 10 megabits per second of data transmission, and fiber networks will handle 100 megabits per second.

All this means that more information, and more kinds of information, can be utilized via PC technology. The data will encompass such things as: Music and sound effects, speech, 3-D graphics, photo-realistic images, motion video and animation. And PCs will have the capability to respond to input via scanners/OCRs, voice, gestures with fingers and pens, and even natural language through any of these media. Microsoft is investing heavily in research into all of these areas.

Our systems strategy is to put in place, via Windows, a scaleable architecture that allows applications, hence users, to take advantage of all this data. We want to evolve the user interface of Windows to take advantage of new approaches to input and output, to allow better appli-



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cation integration and usability, while at the same time providing more and more power under the hood. Advanced systems services will be available through Windows NT and new versions of Windows on MS-DOS. We've enumerated our goals for the last year: More object orientation such as drag-and-drop capabilities and application integration with OLE; and better security and messaging services, sophisticated directory services, and so on under NT.

Windows is being systematically evolved to work on systems ranging from low-powered, portable, pen-based systems to high-performance servers. This means users will have a standard platform supporting a large number of applications, and developers can get the most return on their investment in new products.

"Information At Your Fingertips" is a vision Microsoft has been articu-

lating, but it is not a vision that Microsoft can implement by itself. The same community of users and developers that grew up around MS-DOS is now creating a critical mass for Windows. Users are seeing more and more products become available under Windows, and software developers are seeing more and more customers for Windows products, so they are encouraged to build more, thus attracting more users. This self-sustaining market cycle that began with MS-DOS is now encompassing Windows. And it encompasses, too, all the hardware developers and software developers and user communities of the PC world.

User groups will have an enormous role to play as the industry makes the transition to all these new capabilities, just as user groups did in the original move from pen and paper to PCs. The impact can be even greater, since the user community is

highly organized today, rather than starting from scratch as it did in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Microsoft has worked with a variety of user groups almost from the start. The early ones tended to be highly technical. Today, user group members span the gamut from C++ guru to novice office worker. User groups have provided both formal and informal feedback on many Microsoft products, both systems and applications. Several SIGs have participated en bloc in our beta programs. (One of the favorites was a program in which we paid user group members cash for every new bug they found. It proved a strong incentive for hackers to pound on our product.)

When I and other Microsoft executives speak at user groups, we get direct feedback -- direct, and often quite vocal feedback! -- on products and programs. Because of their

nature, whether they are technical or not, user group participants tend to be on the leading edge -- they might say, bleeding edge -- of the user community, and they are not hesitant to speak out. We often make announcements at user groups as a way of honoring, if you will, the user group role as the voice of the user. Information that comes back to us from user groups is fed to our people in product development. We have placed a lot of emphasis on usability at Microsoft in the last year, as one example, and a lot of input has come from user communities and user focus groups.

More important than helping vendors design better products, though, user groups will remain a primary source of information and knowledge for the user community. As the desktop and home uses of computers rapidly expand in the next decade, the simplification of the user interface will be partly neutralized by the expansion of the market to include individuals with less and less computer savvy than PC users of today. Through meetings, SIGs, newsletters, electronic bulletin boards -- and no doubt through innovative uses of some of the advanced technology mentioned here -- user groups will continue to be a place where individuals can help one another, and teach one another, about exciting new "stuff."

No matter how good the products or technologies, change is always more difficult than stasis; no matter how much support a vendor provides, there are always questions that only other users with similar experiences can easily answer. There will remain in the PC industry for decades a need to pass on certain "folklore" and "common law" about technical matters that cannot be transmitted any better way than person-to-person. It is "Information at Your Fingertips" in the most per-

sonal sense, and user groups are the best forum in which it can occur.

William H. (Bill) Gates III is chairman and chief executive officer of Microsoft Corporation, a multi-national company with a mission to put a computer on every desk and in every home. Bill started his career in computer software at an early age. As a high school student, Bill and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen worked as consultants in the mainframe/minicomputer programming field. In 1974, he and Allen developed a BASIC programming language for the first commercially available microcomputer -- the MITS Altair. With that success, both the microcomputer industry and Microsoft were born. With his leadership and vision, Microsoft sets many of the standards for the software industry in languages, operating systems and applications software.

Make a date with the Far Side

The Computer Calendar
With a Real Sense of Humor

by Rod McKenzie, Contributing
Editor, Madison PC User's Group

Some people read the comics before they read the rest of the newspaper. For those people, and for me, The Far Side Computer Calendar is the answer to a lot of the problems that plague most calendars. It really doesn't make any difference if the calendar is on the computer or in a book. They're usually boring and somewhat out of touch with the real world, and seldom a reason to smile. Gary Larson's Far Side cartoons solve all that. They're never boring

and almost always make you smile. Fortunately, they're still out of touch with the real world, way out!

The Far Side Computer Calendar is a serious, responsible, and flexible calendar program which works in Windows 3.0, featuring very good printing capabilities. The fun is at the front end, where the user can bring up a new Far Side cartoon for every day of the year. Starting the day with a smile and a laugh, or even a good groan, is nectar for the soul.

The program is a Windows 3.0 application and installs very easily. The user is given several options, including the drive and directory where the files will be placed, and whether the graphics files should be included, since they represent the majority of the hard disk space required to store the files. The basic hardware requirement is a 286 or better CPU and 2 MB of RAM, with 1.5 MB of hard disk space for the program and graphics files. The graphics are a one-year supply of cartoons and Amaze!nc hopes to sell graphics "refills" to users in following years. Those new cartoons can then be loaded without having to reload the program or data files.

Gary Larson was initially reluctant to put his cartoons and their distinctive characters onto a computer, but changed his mind when he met the people from Amaze!nc who, he says, have an uncanny resemblance to some of the characters he draws. It sounds like a potential case of fatal attraction, doesn't it? What Amaze!nc was able to do was add animation to the Larson drawings. Be prepared to see the occasional cow flying across the screen or a meteorite crash into the middle of your busy day.

Moving on to the calendar portion of the program, users can have a day view, week view, month and year. If you need to move forward or

backward, there are left and right pointing arrow icon buttons at the bottom of the screen that take you back a screen or forward, respectively. If an event has been highlighted in a week view, and the day icon is clicked, that whole day will be brought up.

In the day and week views, the details of the user's text entries may be read. In the month view, lines fill the boxes representing the days which have actual entries. In that case, cover one of the days with the cursor and click the mouse. That will put the box into reverse video. A click on the day or week icon at the bottom of the screen will shift the calendar to that view and allow the entries to be read or for additional entries to be made.

The entry screen provides well-placed fields for Time, Date, Event, and Notes. Little animated icons can be added to help classify events. Events that need to be signaled by an alarm can have such sound effects as a simple beep (boring), Call to the Post (much better), Charge (for the assertive types), or a Yow! (more in the spirit of The Far Side). Leave off the alarms if you like to take yourself very seriously and don't want them announcing your next activity. These small touches help the user to really look at the entries and read them, rather than just point the eyes at the screen and gaze blankly at the phosphor.

The Far Side Computer Calendar provides an expedited entry method for recurring entries. Here the user can enter a range of dates and then call for an event to be entered for, say, every Friday, or every third Wednesday, or the first of every month. Birthdays, anniversaries, paydays, or the day the mortgage is due can be entered from now until the year 2001.

Editing is very easy: highlight the event, which puts it into a flashing dashed line box and then hit Alt-E-E. That brings up the menu and then Entry and Edit. After making the needed changes, click the mouse on the Save button and exit that screen.

Printing is an independent activity from the view which is on the screen. The dialogue boxes here allow the user to specify the page type: day, week, month, or year; and the size: small, medium, half page and full page. Each choice can be further customized into single- or double-page formats. Depending on the orientation setting of the printer, the program will arrange the pages with the binder rings at the top or bottom, or left to right.

The Far Side Calendar offers lots of printing options. The user may choose to make calendar pages for DayTimers and other personal diaries in formats ranging in size from 3.75" x 6.75", up to double page width in portrait orientation. The popular 5.5" x 8.5" format is supported, too. Each user will have to decide how often and how much of the calendar to reprint. How current is current for you? As soon as new events are penciled onto the paper copy or new ones are added to the calendar on the screen, one is right, but the other one is becoming outdated..

I was disappointed to find that I could not make printouts of the Far Side cartoons themselves. According to Amaze!nc, the problems of copyright infringement would be impossible to control if users were capable of printing Larson's work.

For the user who is usually in front of the computer every day and can take the time to enter and update the events, a calendar makes sense. The Far Side Computer Calendar is a good way to approach the task cheerfully, and you'll even discover

which of your coworkers enjoy Gary Larson's humor. For the rest of them, there's always the Delete Event function.

Prices for the Far Side Computer Calendar will vary depending on the source. While it retails for \$69.95, mail-order pricing at \$49 is not uncommon. No price has been set for the graphics "refills" that are promised for future years.

The Far Side Computer Calendar is a product of: Amaze!nc 11810 115th Ave. NE Kirkland, WA 98034-6923 (206) 820-7007 (800) 367-4802 (206) 823-0568

Stacker 2.0

by Meg Hamel, Madison PC User's Group

In the August 1991 issue of Bits & PC's, Gregory Roeber reviewed Stacker, a disk compression program by STAC Electronics, Inc. Stacker 2.0 has been released, fixing a few bugs and adding a number of useful features.

The Stacker program can increase the amount of available space on your hard drive by compressing the files and decompressing them instantly when you need to use them. Once it is installed on your computer, it works transparently. Utilities like PKZIP need to be told when to do their decompression.

Stacker works by creating one large "Stacker" file on your drive and "stuffs" all your data and program files into that main file through a sophisticated compression algorithm. It then causes your computer to regard this file as a new disk drive. For example, I have an 80 MB hard drive (C:). Stacker created

a "Stacker" file on that drive to hold all my files, and left 1 MB free to hold all relevant boot files and drivers. Using statements added to my CONFIG.SYS file, the computer now boots from the original drive, which is now labeled D:, and the file in which my programs are stored is labeled C:. This ensures that my original directory tree and paths will be maintained and do not need to be changed.

If this sounds completely confusing to you, don't worry. Like most technology, it's one of those hard-to-explain things that you have to see to understand how it works. I think it's more important what Stacker can DO!

Depending on the kinds of files stored on your hard drive, Stacker can double your disk capacity. The reason file type is important is because some kinds of files are already compressed. Every .ZIP, .LZH, .ARJ, etc., file is compressed and can't be compressed much more. Certain graphics files, like .GIFs, use compression. If you have a lot of these types of files on your disk, then you won't reach a 2:1 compression ratio. You'll still get plenty of extra space, though!

I installed Stacker 2.0 on a 16 MHz 386SX, with an 80 MB hard drive and 4 MB RAM. I run DOS 4.01, QEMM 5.11, and Windows. After several weeks, I have not experienced any problems at all that could be connected with Stacker. It works fine with Windows. There is a slight speed decrease as it packs and unpacks files, but this has always been an acceptable delay, no more than a fraction of a second. A slower machine will probably make the speed more noticeable, a faster machine may reduce any noticeable delay.

If speed is a top priority, you can get a version of Stacker that comes with

a coprocessor board that is installed in your computer and is supposed to eliminate this delay during decompression. The Stacker coprocessor board comes in versions for the XT, AT, and Micro-Channel computers.

Installation is easy. You should back up your computer files, but Stacker can be installed with your data still on the disk (you don't need to start with a clean drive). You get several options in the installation process and when you are finished, Stacker copies the install files to your computer, so if you need to make a change or "Stack" a new drive, all the programs are right there.

If you are running Windows, it is a good idea to set up a permanent swapfile before you install Stacker. If you already have a permanent swap file, Stacker will detect it during the installation and leave it in the uncompressed portion of your hard drive. If you had relied on temporary swap files in the past, now's the time to create a permanent one, since it will make Windows run a bit faster, and since you'll be increasing your disk space anyway, you can afford to sacrifice 5 or 6 MB for a swap file!

Anyway, installation is remarkably easy. You need to specify how much disk space you want to leave uncompressed (this will stay on what will become the D: drive), but the default suggestions are usually adequate. You can "Stack" more than one drive, so if you partitioned your hard drive into several different drive letters, you can go ahead and "Stack" each one. As I said before, you can "Stack" existing drives with data already on them. Stacker will also load high using EMS memory.

When you have finished installation, you will notice a few new messages that scroll by as you boot up.

A copy of your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files are kept on both the C: and D: (boot) drives. If I make a change to the CONFIG.SYS file on my C: drive and reboot, Stacker will detect the change and ask if it should copy that file to the D: (boot) drive. This ensures that it always is using the correct boot files.

There are a few Stacker utilities that will help you manage your new, capacious hard drive. There is an enhanced SDIR command that lists the files in your directory followed by the compression ratio of each one. SDEFrag is a special disk optimizer to be used on the Stacker drive. It also allows you to sort your files by name, extension, size, or date. It should be used in place of other disk optimizers. These and other utilities are run from the command line or are easily accessed by a command assistance program called STAC.

A new feature added with version 2.0 is the ability to "Stack" floppy disks, RAM drives, and Bernoulli disks. If you are running a 2 MB RAM drive, you can choose to make it a 4 MB drive, or reduce it to a 1 MB drive ("Stacked" to make a 2 MB RAM drive). Floppy disks can be doubled in capacity, but you can only use these disks on machines that have Stacker running. As soon as I round up enough spare disks, I'm going to try running a backup to "Stacked" disks, to see whether I reduce the number of disks I need. I think it depends on how much the backup program compresses the information it stores.

Speaking of backups, you can back up your computer in two ways. Since the whole Stacker volume is really one big hidden file on your D: drive, you can run a backup on the D: drive that will save that big file intact. However, it probably makes more sense to back up your C: drive

(the Stacker drive) so you save individual files and directories. This will make it possible to restore separate files.

I'm very impressed with Stacker. It has worked very well on my equipment and has allowed me to install a few more huge VGA games that wouldn't fit on my old, crowded drive! The only thing that I found to be disconcerting is the way certain programs report free disk space. There is a difference between the actual space and the estimated space -- this depends on the compression ratio in use. Since I have a ratio of about 1.5:1 (gotta dump some of those old zipped programs!) and Stacker expects a ratio of about 2:1, the difference in reported free space is pretty big.

To change the expected ratio to get more accurate "space free" readings, you must first run the SDEFRAG utility with a command line switch that will prompt you for the new ratio when it has finished the optimization. It's nice that the programmers have written in the capability to change the compression ratio, but I think it is a hassle to have to run the optimization program first. I had only four percent fragmentation, but it took almost half an hour to optimize. This is a long time to wait just so you can get a more accurate file space reading.

The benefits of this program far outweigh any picky little problems, especially because it is designed to work transparently once you have installed it. I have talked to a few people who have used version 1.0 and were disappointed. Some reported real problems with their hard drive. Stacker 2.0 seems to be a significant improvement and there is supposed to be quite a difference in compression times between the old and new versions. I won't be surprised of this technology becomes more widely used in the fu-

ture -- possibly even part of your next DOS operating system!

If you always seem to be scrapping files to make room on your hard disk, I'd recommend Stacker. I think it would be perfect for laptops. And with all the new space I have, I can put off cleaning out my downloaded files directory (again)!

Stacker 2.0 is from: Stac Electronics, Inc. 5993 Avenida Encinas Carlsbad, CA 92008 (619) 431-7474 (619) 431-0880 (FAX)

THE NEIPCUG IS HAVING A CONTEST!!

First a little background. Your club's hard working Board of Directors has been thinking hard about several very interesting issues. For one thing, we have been wondering what we could do to better publicize the club and so attract more new members. We have been wondering what we could do that would get the best "market penetration" for the least expenditure of club capital (don't you just love that kind of talk?). The consensus was that a "prospective member kit" could be left with the local computer retailers and given away with new systems. Another area of concern has been what we could do for the current members that would generate some excitement and get the membership more involved in the club (beyond paying dues and seeing the occasional presentation). To that end, your clever board has come up with a contest. First and foremost, to generate the desired excitement within the club: first prize will be software packages valued at

\$1000.00 (Suggested Retail Price) donated by MicroAge (there will also be other prizes as well). Next, the object is to design a slide show or FLI animation promoting the NEI-PC Users Group. The winning entry will be used as the centerpiece for the "prospective member kit" (which will also include a copy of the constitution and un-exciting stuff like that). The local computer retailers will be installing the "kits" on the computers that they sell, so lots of people will be able to see your genius! So sharpen up your keyboard and your imagination and lets see some of the Fort Wayne inventiveness.

Now on to the rules:

1.) The contest is open to all members of NEI-PC Users Group.

2.) All entries must be submitted by June 30th, either at a regular club meeting or by mail to:

The NEI-PC Users Group
9011 Mariner's Ridge Dr.
Ft. Wayne IN 46819

Be sure to include your name, address, phone and membership number with your entry!!!

3.) Eligible entries will be shown at the July meeting. The winning entry will be determined by vote of all of the members present at that meeting. You need not be present to win.

4.) All entries should run on PC compatible hardware with VGA video in 640 X 480 X 16 colors or 320 X 200 X 256 colors. Entries must run On a freely distributable "player" (such as AAPLAY for example).

5.) The Board of Directors reserves the right to disqualify any entry that is deemed inappropriate.

6.) All submissions become the property of NEI-PC Users Group, including distribution rights.

THE MARCH MEETING

This month we are lucky enough to have Symantic stopping by. They will be talking about Norton Desktop for Windows. For those that have been hibernating in a cave, Norton Desktop is a replacement for the (terrible) Windows File Manager program. There are many other features that enhance the usability of Windows. Symantic will also be talking about computer viruses and how to protect your system from them (if it is not too late by then). We expect to be back up stairs this month, so come on by and stretch out and enjoy the presentation.

Director's Special

By Wayne O'Brien

I had an idea that I thought was pretty good, so I shared it with a couple of the other members of the Board of Directors...and, this is the result. I have taken it upon myself to offer a "Director's Special"!!! My plan was to acquire a shareware product and distribute it for one night only! And at a reduced distribution fee! That's right...at the

March meeting I will have ten (10) copies of a "special shareware disk".

We will charge a reduced fee of only \$2 per disk for each ten copies. (This is the PCUG's disk distribution fee and is not the cost of the software package.) If all ten copies sell, I'll donate a copy to the library for future distribution (at our regular price), and will return next month with another "SPECIAL".

If all ten copies do not sell...this will be the one and only "Director's Special"! For the special this month I compared notes with another Director and came up with the following package. (I can guarantee you that at least two of us have used these products and are very happy with their performance.) March's "Director's Special" contains the following shareware products; 4Print, 4Book, 4Shell, LJBook, and Booklet. 4Print is the Paper-Saving Utility For HP LaserJets, DeskJets, and Compatibles. 4Print prints two or three fully readable pages of text on each sheet of paper using your LaserJet's or DeskJet's landscape (sideways) printing capability. And even without a duplex printer, 4Print can print on both sides of the page, yielding four, six, or even more pages of text on each sheet! 4Print is perfect for program listings and documentation, and its single-column mode is great for wide spreadsheets and database reports! And not only does 4Print's reduced paper consumption mean lower paper costs and less shelf space taken up for storing printouts, it's also good for the ecology!

New with version 4.1 of 4Print is the companion utility 4Book, which makes it easy to produce handsome booklets. Booklets can be customized in dozens of ways, including cover styles, large title fonts, boilerplate text, and even random quotes that print out differently each

time the booklet is printed. Also included is 4Shell which allows Windows users to take advantage of this super quality product. A second package, similar to the above, is LJBOOK which prints text documents in a book format. There are four pages printed on each sheet of paper; two pages on each side of the paper. A HP LaserJet is required. The Y cartridge font is recommended, but any font capable of line printer, landscape, 8.5 point print may be used. An internal landscape font is available.

There are two pages printed on each of the two sides of the paper. Each side consists of a title line and up to 66 lines of 80 characters each. Eighty characters are printed on each line. If the file's lines exceed 80 characters, the lines are wrapped so that 80 characters are printed on each line until the entire file's line has been processed. Both of these packages are excellent at doing what they are intended to do. I personally found LJBOOK the easiest to use, but it doesn't have all the capabilities of 4Print. You will need a HP LaserJet to use both packages (although 4Print supports a DeskJet). And if you don't own a LaserJet, we've included Booklet, which is a British package that will print booklets on a dotmatrix printer. Remember only 10 copies will be available at the reduced price!

XTree Gold V. 2.5

Software Review by Jerry Abbanat, MBUG

Having worked with Norton Commander 3.0 for several years and recently seen PC Tools in action, I was anxious to review an old friend. Quite a few years ago, I worked with Xtree and I must say this new version is an outstanding product.

Xtree Gold is a powerful file and disk management program. For the novice, it takes the usual DOS utilities and organizes them into a remarkably user-friendly menu system. For the advanced user, it increases efficiency in a number of areas.

The program comes on both 3 1/2 inch and 5 1/4 inch disks. A very fine User's Guide takes you from installation through each command with ease. During installation the program "Autobuilds" over 1000 applications that can be run from inside Xtree. The manual explains each command with examples that the user can apply at the keyboard. There is nothing like a "hands-on" approach to learning a new program.

From the DOS prompt, Xtree loads very rapidly. The tree is read and within seconds, you are ready to go. Pull down menus are available as well as single key commands at the bottom of the screen. I like using a mouse along with keyboard strokes and Xtree allows maximum combinations for the user.

File management can be done on the current directory, sub-directories, all directories and across volumes. For example, if you wanted to delete all .BAK files on C and D drives in all directories and sub-directories

you would simply hit (F)ile, *.BAK, (G)lobal and all .BAK files on your entire system will appear. You then can (T)ag them (G)lobally and (D)elete them. The program contains a powerful search feature that can (S)earch all (T)agged files for certain text. It rapidly searches all files and leaves the Tag feature on those files containing the text desired. XTree contains a nice text editor that uses the Wordstar format, however you can install another within the program if you wish.

Application launching went flawlessly and Xtree collapses to 7K when used. File launching is done through BAT files that are easily set up. QuattroPro, for instance, would be set up as WQ1.BAT in the Xtree directory. Clear examples are given in the manual for the novice. The cursor is placed on the file to be launched and (O)pen is hit.

A split-screen feature allows you to compare directories and/or copy and move files quickly. File compression supports PKZip and PKUnzip off of the menu for ease of file maintenance. File (V)iewing is a nice feature and you can scroll through files rapidly to look for the information you want. Xtree file viewing supports the usual word-processing programs as well as Lotus, QuattroPro, Excel, Paradox, etc. Xtree also supports popular graphics file formats (PCX, TIFF, IMG, GIF), however, I found the loading of these to be much slower than PCTools.

Xtree lacks the Communications package, Desktop manager and Backup features of PC Tools. I tried

to locate Xtree Gold 2.5 at a large local software-only store and I was told they did not carry it. They also were out of Norton Commander. They did have PCTools 7.1 at \$149. I then checked several computer magazines for mail-order price comparisons and found Xtree at \$80, Norton Commander at \$79 and PCTools at \$90.

For the average user, I feel that PCTools is very good value since it has the other powerful applications included. I have seen Norton Commander advertised at \$29 through one mail order company and that has to be an outstanding buy. However, for the user who needs the best in file manipulation at the fastest speed I give the nod to Xtree Gold.

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