SESSION XIII

USERS' GROUP MEETINGS

Macintosh user group report

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Approximately 30 people attended the meeting of the Mac user group. The discussion focused on several topics of interest to Macintosh users.

Hardware

There was considerable interest in using the Macintosh as an on-line control computer. There are a number of analog-to-digital boards available for the Mac. There are also a number of software systems that support one or more of the boards. Use of the MacAdios system for control and data logging was reported. The Blumenthal and Cooper paper elsewhere in this issue of BRMIC describes a Pascal-coded system built around the Mac Pack board. Jon Vaughn of Hamilton College reported that his lab uses an old PDP-11 as the interface between the Mac and experimental equipment. (*MacWorld*, July, 1989 [pp. 123-127] lists a large number of add-in boards for the Mac.)

There were several questions about hardware differences between the various Macintosh systems as used in lab applications. The consensus from those who were familiar with most of the systems was that the Mac II is preferable to a Mac Plus or a standard SE for lab use, because of its speed. The SE/30, though, was rated as a better value for lab use than any variety of Mac II, unless the extra slot space in the II is needed.

There were reports that the Mac II cannot do screen dumps: Is this a problem having to do with the treatment of color? There was also a report that Megaroids, a common game used in research, crashes the Mac II.

Lab Packages

Both MindLab and the Drexel University laboratory packages were commented on favorably. Several participants reported having used one or more of their programs in introductory laboratories. A package currently called GenLab is under development by William Banks at Pomona College. It will eventually be able to run a large number of different experiments. It should be nearly complete by June 1990.

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Networks and Information Sharing

The MicroPsych Newsletter, after having been clinically oriented, is now back into academia. It is edited by Emory Sadler at North Carolina A&T, who is known to be very interested in the Macintosh.

A commercial service called (we believe) MacNet sounds very promising as a medium for interchange of information among Mac users. Someone mentioned the possibility of establishing a "MacPsych" conference on MacNet.

Richard Lehman collected the names and addresses of all attendees. The complete list of attendees and others interested in the Macintosh, including both their email and postal addresses and listing each individual's interests and Macintosh skills, is available via Bitnet. The list will be supplemented with the postal addresses of those who attended the Mac User Group meeting at the 1988 SCIP meeting; new additions to the list are welcome. Contact Lehman at R__LEHMAN@FANDM.BITNET for a copy of the list, or to have your name added to it. The list will also be provided to the PsychNet mailing list on Bitnet.

Programming the Macintosh

Has anyone had trouble obtaining technical support from Microsoft on QuickBasic? Microsoft did not write the compiler, and at least one attendee reported having questions that Microsoft was unable to answer.

Zedcor, the developers of ZBasic, received good marks for their user support. They supply a program to convert QuickBasic programs to ZBasic. They have full toolbox access; there was a claim that it was better than QuickBasic's.

There was a plea for agreeing on a "standard" Pascal, Basic, and so forth, to facilitate program transfer. This prompted Hypercard users to suggest Hypertalk as that "standard" language.

Hypercard is being used by a number of attendees. It is possible, they reported, to obtain millisecond time from Hypercard, although Hypercard applications run slowly.

Supercard was reported to run very slowly. A new program, PLUS, reportedly runs Hypercard stacks faster than Supercard does, but it is still slower than Hypercard itself.

When Hypercard stacks are moved to “fancier” machines, they sometimes crash. Try using the control panel to set the system to 2-bit black and white; that often will solve the problem.

Viruses

Nearly all attendees reported having seen virus infections at their institutions. Most of the viruses seemed relatively benign, most often just causing “strange” behavior on infected systems. The commercial programs SAM and Virex received good marks, as did the public domain program Disinfectant.

Transferring Files

Several different approaches to moving files among dissimilar systems were reported. MacLink seems to work

very well, as does Z-Term. The public domain program MCS is very good for Mac-to-Mac transfers. The Apple File Exchange program is excellent for opening, reformatting, and transferring files from numerous sources to the Macintosh. Reading foreign disks requires a Mac with a “superdrive” to read 3.5-in. ProDOS and MS-DOS disks. Transferring files from Apple II systems requires that they first be converted to ProDOS files; then they can be transferred to the Mac.

File transfer using Microsoft’s rich text format (RTF) normally works well. It can get into trouble when lines longer than 80 characters are involved. Jon Vaughn has a program available for shortening lines to 80 characters.