SESSION 13

USERS' GROUP MEETINGS

Macintosh user group report

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About 25 Mac enthusiasts attended the meeting, which was conducted as a question/answer session. The discussion centered on three major areas, and we established a bulletin board for Mac psychology users.

Hardware

A number of attendees expressed interest in the just-announced new Macintosh computers. Several people reported on their experiences with them. There seemed to be general agreement that the Classic is underpowered for lab and faculty use, although it is popular among students because of its price. The Mac IIx may be a popular lab computer once its hardware is better understood. The LC is seen as a replacement for some Apple II equipment in some situations and as a good solution to the color problem. The SE/30 remains a good choice for those individuals needing fast computation and transportability but who have little interest in external interfaces.

Large-screen-display equipment was of considerable interest. The new "top of the line" seems to be the Sony SuperData, an extremely high-quality color video projector. It takes Macintosh output and sells for around \$14,000. Other projection equipment noted included the Kodak Datashow overhead projector unit—although suitable for text and classroom use, its LCD display is far too slow for most research applications. The Proxima large-screen monochrome display was rated as good by one experienced user. It works fine with the Mac II line, but it requires an adapter card. Someone reported seeing information on a Mac II card that produced a standard video output signal that could be processed through an ordinary VCR.

There was a question raised on tape-backup units. No one had any particular experience to report; *MacWorld*

(November 1990, pp. 167-173) reported tests on 43 tape-backup units.

The Superdrive that is now standard on new Macs seems very sensitive to formatting; at least one person reported an inability to read a Superdrive disk on a computer other than the one that created it. Because the magnetic fields used in the Superdrive are much weaker than on the older 400K and 800K drives, the Superdrive will probably not be able to reformat an existing 400K or 800K disk to the 1.4MB configuration. (But 1.4MB disks can be reformatted to 400K or 800K, thus effectively ruining them as potential Superdrive disks in the future.) Once a Superdrive finds a bad sector on a disk, it will mark the disk as unusable and will refuse to format it. An INIT named BAD may offer a solution, since it can block out bad sectors on a Superdrive disk, thus allowing the drive to initialize it.

Software

Retrospect received a good report as an easy-to-use and effective software package for backing up a hard drive.

A couple of people complained about the weaknesses in MacroMaker; they were advised to try QuicKeys 2.0.

SoftPC runs an IBM PC emulator on a Mac. One attendee reported running the PC version of BMDP on it, to his complete satisfaction.

There was considerable interest in HyperCard 2.0, which a few attendees had been able to try briefly. Since it compiles, it will be faster than Version 1.0. The compilation is on the fly, so the first time a particular routine is encountered, it will run more slowly than on subsequent occasions. This variability will make it difficult to develop stacks for conducting research. There seems to be a way, though, to force all modules to be compiled during an initialization phase, thus eliminating the time variability and making HyperCard a useful tool for developing research environments. Someone knew of the existence of HyperCard XCMDs to access both millisecond timers and a MIDI interface. There was interest in doing

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statistical computations in HyperCard, but most agreed that it seemed difficult to do. Clear Lake Research (developers of the CLR ANOVA program) markets a HyperCard statistics program; no one was familiar with it.

An application called AuthorWare (from a company of the same name) offers a way to temporarily exit from a running application, present additional information (e.g., help screens and the like), and then return to the original application.

One attendee reported having used SoundDesigner to make direct digital recordings with the Mac. He reported that the system was very effective and easy to use.

The participants discussed the cost of software, with particular emphasis on the cost of licenses and agreements covering local networks. Most felt that publishers would be well served by lowering costs for such use, since it would reduce the numbers of unauthorized copies that may be present in lab systems.

Networks

For networks, TOPS was reported as working nicely, especially in mixed PC/Mac environments. A Novell network server is in use at Pitzer College and is working very well.

America On-Line was rated highly by several people as a commercial bulletin board that often will provide quick answers to Mac questions posted by users.

Problems related to running a local network with a hard disk were discussed. System administrators were advised to keep the server device locked to prevent students from loading it up and crashing the network. One lab requires students to post a monetary deposit to obtain a boot disk that will let them access the network. Software security

on a network received considerable discussion. A simple way to provide low-level security is to store a simple start-up document for each application on the server and then make the applications themselves invisible with the use of ResEdit or some other tool. Since the application icons then can't be seen, they can't be copied. (Of course, leaving ResEdit or the other tool on the network itself would easily defeat the security.) For more effective software security, Dopleganger or Launch_Break make an operational "copy" of an application on a networked Mac, but the copy itself cannot be copied. Launch_Break also offers the ability to control the number of copies that may be in use simultaneously.

A Bulletin Board for Mac Psychologists

For the second year, Richard Lehman collected names and postal and email addresses of everyone in attendance. Charles Huff, of St. Olaf College, offered the services of his system to serve as a "query center" for email users. The service will operate as an unedited bulletin board. St. Olaf will have a list of email addresses of subscribers; inquiries directed to the list will be automatically rebroadcast to all recipients. Users may post questions or suggestions on the bulletin board; recipients may reply to the entire list or individually to a single questioner.

The list of email addresses from the 1989 and the 1990 SCiP Mac user group meetings will serve as the initial mailing list. Anyone wishing to subscribe should communicate with Lehman at R_LEHMAN@FANDM.BIT-NET. Lehman will also maintain a postal address list of interested individuals and can make it available electronically or via hard copy.