SESSION 10 COMBINED PC/MACINTOSH USERS' GROUPS

Report from the user group meeting

At this year's meeting, the Mac and the PC user groups were combined. There was a small attendance, which consisted primarily of Mac users; the low attendance was perhaps due, at least in part, to last-minute changes in the schedule.

The success of the Macintosh electronic mailing list (MacPsych), started last year, was discussed, along with some participants' desire to establish a parallel list for IBM PC users. The MacPsych list has roughly 250 names and is expanding its services to include a library of "bundled" dialogs and a software archive. (More information about MacPsych can be obtained by e-mail to macpsych-request@stolaf.edu.) The editor of *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers (BRMIC)*, N. John Castellan, was asked to encourage authors of Mac software described in the journal to deposit their software in MacPsych; he has already been doing so. The SCiP Steering Committee formally endorsed the MacPsych list and archive, which gave a semi-official blessing to the project. The formation of a sublist of the MacPsych list for HyperCard users was discussed.

HyperCard itself was the topic of extended discussion by the group. Some concern was expressed over the ambiguity of Apple's continued support of HyperCard, in particular, the fact that Apple no longer ships HyperCard documentation with Macintosh computers. Certain limitations of HyperCard were noted, such as the absence of built-in support for numeric arrays, color animation, and so on. One participant noted that two-dimensional numeric arrays could be accessed in HyperCard applications by using XCMD calls to appropriate subroutines. Another participant noted that the program ADDMotion allows color animations to be created and played from within HyperCard and that it is quite easy to use. Some additional concerns were expressed concerning compatibility between HyperCard 1.0 and 2.0 and the fact that HyperCard applications developed within 2.0—even those not using capabilities unique to 2.0—could not be run from within 1.0 or saved in a format compatible with 1.0. Nor is it possible, as in SuperCard, to create stand-alone applications for use by people not having HyperCard 2.0.

Several participants suggested that this is not much of a problem because they expect most Macintosh users will eventually convert to HyperCard 2.0 anyway.

Several reference sources for HyperCard were discussed, with *HyperCard in a Hurry* and *HyperCard 2.0 in a Hurry* (by G. Beckman), *Cooking with HyperTalk 2.0* (by D. Winkler & S. Knaster), and *HyperTalk 2.0: The Book* (by S. Kamins & D. Winkler) receiving favorable comments.

Some problems in using additional memory on the Macintosh when running System 6 MultiFinder and System 7 were discussed. Under System 6, only 8 MB can be accessed by the user's applications, unless special software is employed. Connectix OPTIMA, for example, provides for "enhanced" 24-bit addressing, enabling user applications to claim up to 14 MB of RAM. In System 7, running in the 32-bit mode allows the user's applications to access all of the available memory. However, only software that is "32-bit clean" will run properly in this mode, thus leaving users in the awkward position of having to switch addressing modes, depending on the particular applications they are running. One participant noted that many of the applications that the System 7 checker claimed were incompatible with the 32-bit mode seemed to run just fine in this mode.

Several participants asked questions concerning the possibility of millisecond timing on the Macintosh. A participant noted that the only limitation that cannot (apparently) be surmounted is the 11-msec polling limit imposed by the keyboard. It was noted that psychologists rarely need timing accuracy of this order of magnitude, although everyone seems to want it. Several people pointed out that timing is most critical with respect to displaying stimuli on the monitor: If proper attention is not given to synchronizing events with the monitor refresh cycle, then all sorts of problems can arise. On the response end, however, 10–20 msec (or even more) errors in timing are unlikely to have a substantial impact on the results, particularly when reaction times are averaged across two or more replications. One participant related a series of studies that compared timings based on the Mac internal timer and

those taken from an external device—the times were always very close. Some studies on response timing on Macintosh computers have been published in *BRMIC*.

Two participants related their experiences in using WordPerfect 2.09 (for the Macintosh) to edit large documents containing numerous figures and graphics. Substandard performance, and an annoying bug that caused all graphics to be lost with power failures, caused both of these participants to store all graphics in a document separate from the main (text) document. Although this greatly speeds up the processing of text in the main document, it renders the page-positioning, figure-numbering, and cross-referencing features of WordPerfect useless. It was also noted that importing an equation from Expressionist (an equation editor for the Macintosh) as a graphic, and double clicking on the expression, causes WordPerfect 2.0 to crash.

Several solutions to mass data storage were discussed. Tape-drive backup units allow large amounts of information to be stored on cassette tape, although the sequential storage on tape makes restoring individual files inefficient. One participant noted that removable hard-disk units are now cost competitive with many tape-backup systems and are much more efficient to use. Another participant noted

that for \$3,000, one could purchase a rewritable optical storage device with gigabyte capacity.

The trials and tribulations of using accelerator boards for the Macintosh were discussed at some length. Although the boards provide substantial improvements in performance, some participants experienced problems in running certain kinds of software on machines with accelerator boards. Two participants also noted problems with the power switches on their Macintoshes—the computer would occasionally get into a state in which it could not be turned on from either the keyboard or the rear panel.

One participant reported that the Sharp QA color overhead-projector display is an outstanding performer, better than the more expensive SONY projector.

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