SESSION XIV

USERS' GROUP MEETINGS

IBM PC, PS/2, and compatibles

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The ideas discussed in a group meeting of users of IBM PC, PS/2, and compatibles are summarized.

The meeting lasted for 2 h. During this time, a variety of problems and issues were raised, and recommendations were made. The ideas discussed are briefly summarized below.

Graphics

Two packages, Flicker and Mirror, were strongly criticized. There was some agreement that Dan Cad (\$35) is a good buy, Acrospin (\$30) is adequate, Mace Grasp is good, and Metagraphics in MEL is powerful and flexible.

Two packages may produce American Psychological Association-style data graphs: Microsoft Chart and Harvard Presentation.

Linking to BITNET Without a Mainframe

VAX computers make excellent connections to BITNET, but no one knew of a micro-to-BITNET linkup that does not use a mainframe. N. John Castellan from Indiana University planned to check with EDUCOM to find out if a solution to this problem exists.

What to Use for Classroom Lectures

Most contributors preferred Zenith laptop computers over IBM machines because the IBM was judged to be clumsy and expensive. Several different varieties of software were recommended: Present, Generic Present, Executive Writer and Filer, Owl, and Q and A.

Good Clones

PC Resources, PC World, and Infoworld were all recommended as good sources of reviews. There was some consensus that clones should use a western digital controller and BIOS by Phoenix. Many participants believed that the Zenith clones were reliable and inexpensive. Individuals should check to determine if their univer-

sity is a member of EDUCOM. If so, their EDUCOM representative may know of price deals that are superior to those that can be obtained through purchasing departments.

Hard Disks

Hard disks can be backed up on cassette tapes (equipment costs about \$300-\$400), videotape (slightly more expensive), Bernoulli drives (at least \$1,700), or regular diskettes (3½ or 5¼ in.). A variety of good software exists for rapid backup to diskettes, including BK (available from Wally Schneider at the University of Pittsburgh), PC Tools, PC Fullbak, Fastbak, and BAC (which used to be available from PC Magazine).

One out of 8 participants had a system crash in the last year. There is software to help salvage information on disk; PC Tools was strongly recommended. One user of clones warned that all data on their hard disk were lost when they upgraded from POS 3.2 to 3.3.

Running an Operant Laboratory

Interface cards can be obtained from many sources, including Metrobyte, John Bell Engineering, Life Science Associates, Tecmar, and Lafayette Instruments. However, it might be better to use less expensive hardware, for example, a Commodore 64, rather than a PC. Inexpensive software and inexpensive interfaces are available for the Commodore.

Test Generators

Participants generally agreed that the programs available were terrible. One interesting suggestion was to use a word processor and to define each test item as a footnote. A variety of manipulations can often be done on footnotes.

Spreadsheets

Many spreadsheets were described as good. Quattro (\$45) may be the best buy.

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Statistics Software

A variety of good packages were mentioned, including Minitab, SPSS/PC+, NCSS, MYSTAT, and Systat. Choosing the best package depends on individual needs (see Butler & Neudecker, 1989).

Obtaining Software

It is possible to obtain some expensive programs at very low cost. To do so, one must negotiate and make a multiple purchase from an educational institution. It was reported that Word Perfect (with manuals) had been obtained for as little as \$65.

User Group

The group planned to share addresses and to do some future communication using the COMPSYSCH bulletin board.

REFERENCES

- BUTLER, D. L., & NEUDECKER, W. (1989). A comparison of inexpensive statistical packages for microcomputers running MS DOS. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 21, 113-120.

Macintosh and Apple II

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Some 25 Apple users met to exchange technical information and insights concerning the use of Apple computers in psychology. The discussion addressed such topics as real-time laboratory control, graphics, the use of intelligent peripheral devices for laboratory control, and software useful in the classroom, with emphasis on the Macintosh line of computers. Enthusiasm was expressed both for the power and versatility of leading-edge technology, and for the economy and reliability of trailing-edge technology. The group decided to establish a mailing list of attendees, so that an informal network of Apple users might be nurtured.

Digital Equipment Corporation's PDP-11 computers

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Although attendance was small, there was a good discussion of the use of PDP-11 computers to run psychology laboratories. Also discussed was the superior power of such operating systems as RSX, as compared with those usually available for the PDP-11, to control several smart hardware boxes, which in turn control research stations.