



EUGENE NEWSLETTER

PCjr CLUB

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1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220, Eugene, OR 97401

February Meeting Agenda: The February 9th meeting will be held in the Ida Patterson School Library, 16th and Polk, in Eugene. Set up and disk sales will start at 6:30 and the meeting will begin at 7pm. We will have printer demonstrations, discuss different types of printers and will address any printer problems members may have. Bring questions!



Winter has moved down from Alaska and Eugene is blanketed with snow. Your editor sure hopes that he can get down out of the south hills to the copy shop! It surely is beautiful outside and while I don't look forward to driving in this stuff, it'll be good to get out.

As you see from the agenda this month, we are focusing on printers. At the meeting, we hope to discuss and demonstrate the two main types of printers, dot-matrix and daisywheel. We looked around for a laser printer, but no one in the club owned up to having one. We will also have "printer patterns" from many different makes and models of printers to pass around, so, if you are in the market for a new or different printer, this may be a meeting you won't want to miss. If you should go by a retailer before you come to the meeting, pick up some patterns of their printers and bring them along. (Be sure to mark the make, model and cost, if available, on each.)

If you are one of those members who are perfectly content with your printer, why not think about bringing it for the rest of us to take a look at it. While this may be extra effort on your part, it would be appreciated by all of us. If this is too much to ask, bring in a copy of the printer's test pattern. Most will print a test pattern by pressing and holding the "on line" or another switch on the front or top of the printer while, at the same time, turning on the power. If you do bring in a test pattern, please write the make and model of the printer on the top of the page so we can tell what printer made the pattern.

At next month's meeting, we will be presented with an overview of several word processing programs. While we won't be having indepth lectures on any of them, we do hope to show some of the more popular programs, present their strengths and reveal some of their weaknesses. But, as you can see from most of the articles in this month's issue of the newsletter, printers will be the main theme at the February meeting. Bring a friend!



Q: At last! Santa brought us a modem for Christmas and it works great. Now, I need to know who to call. Are there any Junior Bulletin Boards I can talk to?

Al in Sacramento

A: Four Junior specific boards come to mind, Al. There is the Bare Bone at (405) 987-3972, Junior Blue at (209) 745-9284, The Bionic Dog at (617) 964-8069, and the PCjr Work Shop at (404) 623-8423. If some of our readers know of other boards for Juniors, drop us a line.

HELP!!!



NOTICE TO ALL VENDORS, MEMBERS (past and present), NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS (past and present), BULLETIN BOARD SYSOPS or OTHERS WHO NEED TO CORRESPOND WITH THE Eugene PCjr Club.

The Club's ONLY address is: 1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220, Eugene, OR 97401.

We would like to appologize to those persons who have been dropped from our subscription services because we have failed to receive their correspondence or newsletters. If you have been trying to contact us, please note the above address. Many Bulletin Boards throughout the country, including IBM, have an incorrect address listed. We are sorry for this mixup, and if we have failed to answer you inquiries, please try again, but to our Valley River address. If you would like to contact a member of the club, but don't know their home address, just mark your letter to their attention and we'll make sure they get it. Thank you!

What Kind of Printer Should I Buy?

Back in May of '88, Brit Hume and T.R. Reid addressed this problem in their syndicated column, "Computer Report" that appears in many newspapers. We are going to paraphrase their article here.

Of course, their answer to this question was that, if you had plenty of money, you should purchase a laser printer! While most Junior owners don't fit into this category, their advice is sound. Indeed, it was the laser printer that really opened up the field of desktop publishing. The laser printers combine speed and versatility with superior quality that other types of printers just can't match. But, while prices continue to fall, laser printers are still very costly and are fairly expensive to maintain for the average Junior owner. Still, there is no way to beat their "letter-quality."

When we speak of "letter-quality" we generally are talking about a daisywheel or impact printer. Some are actually typewriters that get their signals from a computer instead of a keyboard. They generate nice-looking correspondence and reports, looking like they were type-written; actually, they were. These printers are becoming relatively cheap as the demand for faster printers with more typefaces becomes greater.

But, there are drawbacks to daisywheel printers. They are slow, loud and inflexible. You can change type faces only by buying different print wheels, and they can be costly. When I attended school, many teachers told us not to use computers to do our papers as it was hard on their eyes to try to read the print. Well, they never realized that all of my papers were done on an old, slow daisy-wheel printer.

Things have changed rapidly in the field of dot-matrix printers. Costs have come down and quality has gone up. Now, few teachers could discern between a paper that was typed and one that was done on a dot-matrix printer.

You can purchase a dot-matrix printer for less than \$200 and it will provide speedy, but "dotty" output. While we talked about "letter-quality" above, this print is called "draft." In draft-mode, dot-matrix printers literally zoom through a printing chore at very fast speeds. Most of them have a "near letter-quality" mode and others have a "letter-quality" mode. These slow up the printing process somewhat as the print head makes two, or more, passes over the paper as it prints.

While daisywheel printers can bold and underline text, dot-matrix printers are much more flexible in that they can also do italics, condensed print, several different typefaces, and have no problems with symbols, graphics and letters like â, ö, or José.

keep going

And if you still require correspondence that looks like it came from a Selectric, there are 24-pin printers now on the market (as opposed to the common 9-pin printers). Their print in LQ (letter-quality) mode must be looked at pretty closely to determine just what type machine did it.

As a first-time buyer, you should be concerned with compatibility. Using a Junior, you should make sure that your printer is "Epson-compatible." Epson was the pioneer in dot-matrix printers so most software was written with them in mind. While your printer doesn't have to be of the Epson brand, it should be able to "emulate" an Epson.

You should be concerned with speed even though you may not feel you actually need a fast printer. Remember, though, that sometimes speed may mean more cost. Tractor-feed means that the printer will be able to use continuous form paper. Friction-feed is for single sheet paper; most printers will be able to be switched back and forth between the two modes. Some tractor-feeds push the paper through the printer while other pull the paper through. Pull feeds are more reliable, but unless you use products such as Form Saver, you often must waste the first sheet to get your paper lined up with the top of the second page.

So, look around before you buy. At the February meeting there will be many of the members bringing in their printers along with a sample of how the print looks. Come and look around...and ask questions like "do you recommend this printer" or "how much did it cost?" The best question may be, "what do you dislike about your printer?"



PROBLEM PRINTERS ~ ~ PRINTER PROBLEMS

Does your printer begin each new document with a "5" in the upper left corner? Does it spit out an extra sheet of paper at the end of your text? Does it double space when you want it to single space, and single space when you want it to double space? Does it print in both directions when you select "test," yet only prints from left to right when you are printing files? Can't tell the difference between bold and underlined? It won't do subscripts?

Before you trade it in, check your software. Have you run the "setup" program to make sure that your soft- and hardware are tuned to each other? Most software will have a list of printers to choose from in their setup menu. If your printer isn't listed, try Epson (if there is such a thing as a "generic" printer code, it must be Epson's). This code works quite well for my Silver-Reed daisy wheel! Not running setup is by far the most common cause of printer dilemmas.

DIP switches are another source of problems, but they can also be the solutions to problems. Read the manual! These one-size smaller than little switches control the amount of movement the carriage makes both laterally and horizontally. This means that if the problem is line spacing or super- or subscripts, it may due to incorrectly set DIP switches. Text piling up on top of itself or being stretched out is another DIP switch problem. Check your printer manual; you may be able to print foreign language characters, scientific notations or even completely different type fonts. Oh yes, don't forget to

Keep going - more on next page

make a note of the original positions of the DIP switches before you begin experimenting with them!



Q. What is the difference between a serial and a parallel printer?

A. In essence, the way the data gets from the computer to the printer is the most drastic difference. A serial printer can be likened to a modem in that it receives the characters and control characters in a "series," like beads strung along a thread. Thus, the serial printer has to decode the stream of data that it gets along a single path of signal wires. A similar analogy could be black and white beads. The signal will contain a "word" of data made up of 8 beads. Which ones are black or white determines what character or control the printer is to act on. But, since the beads come in one at a time, the serial printer has to wait and count up "8" and then resolve what should be done, printing or moving the paper.

The parallel printer is connected to the computer via at least 8 wires which represents the above example of black and white beads. The printer cable you have connecting your system unit and printer will vouch for the increase in signal-carrying wires: it's a pretty stiff cable. In the parallel printer's case, it is presented a fully constructed character or control code (made up of the 8 black and white beads, if you will), and translation to the printed character on the page is more direct and speedy. Since the parallel printer will have (virtually) no

delay in decoding, characters-per-second speeds are up to the usual brevity we expect, pushing 120 characters per second and more. You will also find more parallel printers using extra internal circuitry to make font setting (shape and size of the letters) part of the printer's task, instead of the driving software. Since the cost of the decoding circuitry of the serial method is eliminated, the printer company can put more money into other "utility" features like pushbutton selection of page widths and the like.

Not to say the serial printer is a dinosaur, it has just been vastly overshadowed by more efficient designs. If you'd like to look at it this way, you could pick up a cheap compact printer (serial), and use it for drafts and quick memos, saving your parallel for the full blown output. (Fox Tails, Fox Valley PCjr Association, Plainfield, IL)



DECIPHERING A DISK

As many members are purchasing programs from many sources besides the disk library, we felt that this article by Bruce Holmen that appeared in the Ventura Personal Computer User's Group Newsletter may also be of use to some of our membership.

OK, you just got a program disk from your local Personal Computer Users' Group. You take the disk home to introduce it to your very own personal computer, and it's like the first time you set up a friend on a blind date. Nothing happens. Nobody knows what to say, or even where to start...

continued on next page

Simply read on and in this very Newsletter, we shall present you with the keys to success in deciphering a disk!

1) Label the original disk, so you will know what it is. This sounds silly, but many people no longer know what programs they have.

2) Put a write-protect tab on the original, and make a DISKCOPY. This way you can experiment with the copy, knowing that your original is safe from harm.

3) Run a DIR to see what files the disk contains. If you want a hard copy directory listing, type DIR> LPT1: at the DOS prompt.

4) Look for a file called READ.ME or README or README.DOC or something similar. Such files are like the magic cookies that Alice carried with her in Wonderland. If the cookie says EAT ME, you eat it. If the file says READ.ME, you read it. How? Type this command at a DOS prompt> TYPE READ.ME and press Enter.

5) Use the command COPY READ.ME LPT1: (or COPY README PRN) to get a hard copy listing. Be sure your printer is ready before you enter the command. READ.ME files are usually quite short, less than ten pages, and often only one or two.

6) Read the READ.ME file. It may tell everything you need to know about getting started. If not, read on...

7) Look for files with the .DOC extension. These are normally program documentation files, much larger than a typical READ.ME file. Some may run 80+ pages.

8) Look for .BAT files. These are DOS Batch Command files that have been written to make your life easier. Try them! After all, you

are running on a copy, not the original. What can go wrong? ...can go wrong? ...can go wrong?

9) Look for .COM and .EXE files. These are the actual programs that must run for the computer to do anything useful. Most disks will have both .COM and .EXE files, just to keep things interesting. If in doubt, try the .COM files first, since .COM files can call (i.e., run) .EXE files, but not vice versa.

10) There are no files with .BAT, .COM, .DOC, or .EXE extensions. Look for files with the .BAS extension. Eureka! You have a disk full of BASIC programs. This is wonderful IF you happen to have BASIC on your computer. With a PCjr, this (normally) requires the BASIC Cartridge. With any other machine, it requires the BASIC that came on your DOS disk. Unless you are running a True-Blue IBM PC, you must have GWBASIC, Compaq BASIC, or some other version that can run without the IBM proprietary ROM chips. Good luck!

11) By now, you have either found something to run, or you have already formatted the disk and quit reading this spiffy article. It's a free country. I don't mind if you give up. But your computer will never let you live it down!

12) Try the silly program! After all, it is only bits and bytes. Besides, even if the program is a real dog, the bark is worse than the byte. (I can't believe I actually wrote that.)

President.....Mike Luttio
 Vice-President.....Phil Janz
 Sect/Treasurer.....Juanita Hampton
 Modem Captain.....Bruce Brown
 Disk Librarian.....Cindy Hoffman
 Refreshments.....Elleen Levy
 Newsletter Editor.....Louie Levy

"HEARD (HERD?) ON THE STREET"

by Dick Page

DID YOUR SALESPERSON GET A "SPIFF" FOR SELLING YOU THAT SOFTWARE?

PC WORLD Magazine has a good consumer watch section. Here is one example from the column in the January 1989 issue:

"If you think your computer dealer is recommending a product because it's perfect for your needs, you may be dead wrong. Salespeople get 'spiffs' - also known as 'push money' - for selling certain products. These bonuses are offered directly from the vendor.

"For example, \$25 was paid for every sale of QUATTRO when it was first released; \$40 was offered for every sale of Q & A WRITE. Considering that the packages retail for \$249 and \$199, respectively, those are hefty commissions.

"Spiffs aren't unique to the computer industry, but still, how far can you trust a salesperson's advice if there is a hidden payoff? Says one salesperson who asked to remain anonymous, 'I benefit from spiffs, but I think they're crooked. It's no problem if I'm being offered a spiff on an excellent package like PFS: FIRST CHOICE - I don't have any qualms about recommending it. But what about when the spiff is offered on something that's no good? It's a real dilemma because spiffs are a big part of my income.'"

"Finding out when a spiff is behind a recommendation is difficult, but gutsy consumers who feel they're being pushed into a sale may want to pop the question." [Ed.: But will a 'spiff pusher' give an honest reply?]

**PC TOOLS DELUXE VERSION 5
FINALLY ARRIVES!**

Central Point Software, Inc., of Portland, OR, has held up its newest version of the disk and file utility program for several months while it worked out some unexpected bugs and added a few additional features. It is now out and the wait seems worth it if you are looking for a power-packed combination of NORTON UTILITIES ADVANCED EDITION and SIDEKICK PLUS.

The package includes programs which help in the three following areas: Desktop organization, data recovery, and hard disk back-up.

The manual is a whopping 527 pages thick - as compared to 163 pages for Version 4, and 67 pages for Version 3! That must mean that there really is a lot packed into this software bundle or someone is truly verbose or that the programs aren't all that easy to understand!

I haven't yet been able to give it a good run for the money (because my copy came just yesterday). The manual lists nine main groups of utilities.

(1.) PC SHELL allows you to manipulate files without having to remember all those strange D.O.S. Command formulas. You can sort, copy, move, or delete files in a fast logical way, and analyze your disks for errors, or change the volume label on your disks with ease.

(2.) DESKTOP gives you up to 15 resident notepads, a spell checker, outliner, and several calculators as well as a database, appointment scheduler, ASCII table, and a communications package.

(3.) PC SECURE encrypts and compresses your files, keeping sensitive data safe and secure.

(4.) REBUILD recovers data from a hard or floppy disk that has been accidentally formatted or corrupted. A great recovery program.

(5 - 9) PC BACKUP, MIRROR, PC FORMAT, COMPRESS, and PC CACHE work with hard drives to save copies of your hard drive, protect against accidental reformat, safely format hard and floppy disks, unfragment files, and improve access time by storing frequently used information in memory.

Easy to learn? I'll find out as soon as I wade through that mammoth manual! They claim it is a breeze to learn because all the programs share the same layout design. It supports a mouse or keyboard, and commands for the mouse and keyboard are very similar to those of Microsoft Windows and OS/2's Presentation Manager.

I have been very happy with the previous versions from Central Point Software and expect I won't be disappointed now.

Don't stop; turn page...

A BOOK FOR KQ FANATICS

COMPUTE! Books recently published "The Official Book of King's Quest - Daventry & Beyond" by Donald B. Trivette (\$10.95, 138 pages). If you are an avid KQ'er this book is a must. It is a hint book and much, much more.

Along with helps, score values, clues, and maps of each KQ program there are crossword puzzles, a chapter on the history of the KQ series and the founding of Sierra On-Line (the IBM PCjr plays a prominent role in their start-up), and full color pictures of the process used in designing and developing individual scenes.

Did you know that special software - hidden code and secret commands - was left in some versions of KQ and you can make use of those previously undocumented commands? This book tells you how.

KING'S QUEST IV UPDATE

While Christmas had many up moments, one downer was the discovery that Cindy's present, KING'S QUEST IV, wouldn't run on our Junior.

You can get it to work as long as you have the correct version.

The 512K version won't work - even if you have 640K. That is because Sierra On-Line is using a new software development system called "Script Interpreter," SCI for short. The first Sierra system used was AGI (Adventure Game Interpreter) and only required 256K to run. SGI is more complex and therefore, requires more memory. In the process it doubles the graphic resolution, adds mouse support, MIDI music, and improves parsing of user input.

Most stores and mail order houses sell only the 512K version. However, there is an order card inside which can be mailed in for the AGI version of the game.

Don't despair because of this delay. While the few days wait will seem like an eternity, it is well worth the delay.

The AGI version looks every bit as good or better than previous Sierra games and uses the same story line, puzzles, arcade games, and solution as the SGI version. On a Junior it still makes great use of PCjr's 16 colors and three-voice sound system.

UNPROTECTING
B.A.S.I.C. PROGRAMS

QUESTION: Sometimes when trying to LIST a B.A.S.I.C. program I only get an "illegal function call" response from Junior. What is wrong?

ANSWER: BASIC programs can be "protected" by the programmer from any tampering by the users. Normally this is done to prevent a user from accidentally messing up the program code. But, if you need to modify the code, there is a way to "unlock" it. Just follow these steps:

1. Start Cartridge BASIC and create a 3 line BASIC program by typing:
10 PRINT "HELLO" <Enter>
20 GOTO 10 <Enter>
30 END <Enter>
2. Save this simple program by typing:
BSAVE "UNPRO.CIM",&H400,&H7F <Enter>
3. LOAD the program you want to unprotect.
4. Then type:
BLOAD "UNPRO.CIM" <Enter>
5. That's it. You can now LIST and modify the BASIC program. SAVE it when you're done.

Negatives: The program may not work after it has been copied to another disk or it may not work a second time. You may have to repeat this process each time you use it.

From Todd Pollock, as printed in the METRO PCjr JOURNAL, March 1988.



ANSWER TO QUESTION ON PAGE 1:
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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- 1 Page - \$18.00
- 1/2 Page - 9.00
- 1/4 Page - 5.00

Classified **For Sale** ads in this section of the Newsletter are \$2 for 25 words or less to nonmembers and free to members on a one-time basis. Ads should be placed at least two weeks before the next club meeting, and all payments should accompany the ad request.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: All material submitted for the Eugene PCjr Club Newsletter **must** arrive prior to noon the first Thursday of the month if it is to make that month's edition. Material can be in any format: hand-written on used envelopes, on disk using any word processing program or type written. Just make sure it gets to the editor in time!

EUGENE PCjr CLUB, 1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220, Eugene, OR 97401. Please furnish the following:

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EUGENE PCjr CLUB

1011 Valley River Way, Suite 220
 Eugene, OR 97401

Richard Page 8/89
 5025 Willamette St.
 Eugene, OR 97405

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