The Chronicle of the Atlanta PCjr Users Group

Volume 3, Number 7

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January, 1991

PRODIGY REVISITED

PRODIGY ON THE PCir

by Zyg Skrobenski

I love to know that my PCjrcan do things that other, more modern, computers can not. One such example is the ability to receive the *Prodigy* Service in full color!

The other machines are able to get the service in color, but only if they are equipped with the more costly graphic adapter cards (such as EGA or VGA). My "other" computer at work is a 286 AT clone with a color monitor, but it cannot receive *Prodigy* in color because it only has a CGA color graphics adapter! I would have to obtain the proper graphics card to get color. The PCjr, on the other hand, has a superior color system compared to the CGA. A scheme similar to the jr's was adopted by Tandy for use with their 1000-series computers.

Zyg Skrobanskiis a long-time memberof APCjrUG and has been using PRODIGY for more than a year. This article, writtenô response to a tearful plea from your Editor, is an an evaluation of the latest version of PRODIGY on Zyg's PCjr. We appreciate the effort and knowyou'll be interested inwant he has to say. - Editor

Prodigy; owned by a partnership of Sears and IBM, is a sort of electronic magazine. What makes it different from services such as CompuServe or other Bulletin Boards is that it is an interactive system. Prodigy actually uses the computing power of your computer, rather than treating it as a "dumb" display terminal, which is how the other systems work.



Think of it, my PCir which I purchased six years ago, not only works with the latest systems but it can display them better than more modern machines equally equipped!

Unfortunately, *Prodigy* does not officially support the PCjr. This was a real problem when the system first started a couple of years ago. The original software supplied with the start-up

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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The Orphan Peanut

INFORMATION, PLEASE

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*Designates Membership Committee Contact Person The ORPHAN PEANUT is the official newsletter of the Atlanta **PC**jr Users Group, a distressingly non-profit organization dedicated to the health and well-being of the first Orphan and first "clone" from IBM - the "Peanut". The Group's single purpose is as stated in Article 2 of our Constitution:

"...to provide a forum for members to share information, experiences, and techniques of use that will help other members derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their PCir."

The ORPHAN PEANUT is designed, laid out, and entirely created on a PCjr with 736 KB of RAM or 8 MHz of clock speed (but not both together), a Microsoft Mouse, a second floppy drive (3.5") from PC Enterprises, and two 20-megabyte hard disks from RIM via Paul Rau Consulting. There's other stuff as well, but we forget just what.

Software used includes **TEXTRA** word processing (ver. 6.0) and **QEdit** (2.1) text editor, **PFS:First Publisher** (3.0) desktop publishing with **Publishers' Power Pak** (2.0) font enhancing routines, and sundry other programs of varying usefulness.

Permission is hereby granted for the abstraction and republication of any and all original articles in this publication, with the dual provisos that the sense of the article not be changed and that proper credit be given the author and *The ORPHAN PEANUT*. What a deal!

PRODIGY on the PCir...

(From Page 1)
kit was not jr friendly! Always resourceful, PCjr users came up with a simple patch to convert to Tandy

compatible color (which is supported by *Prodigy*).

However, the software still caused the jr's to lock up frequently, and various techniques were adopted to make the system work.

These problems and a somewhat lack of features of the service, initially turned many PCjr users away from *Prodigy*.

Recently *Prodigy* has introduced a new software upgrade (version 3.1), added new features and generally improved service. Although still not officially supporting the PCjr, the new software can easily be made to work well with it!

So what needs to be done to the PCjr so that it can receive *Prodigy*? First of all you need to increase the memory of your jr to 640k or more. The *Prodigy* installation procedure is followed and the two "Personal Disks A and B" are prepared. You should set aside as much memory for the video RAM as possible. Use the PCJRMEM.COM or CONFIGJR utilities in the main CONFIG.SYS file in the Prodigy "Disk A" to establish the PCjr working parameters at time of "booting".

A typical CONFIG.SYS file will be as follows:

DEVICE=CONFIGJR.NRD -j-t3-v96 BUFFERS=20 FILES=20 I use v96(96k video memory) though I've read that v32 will also work. The PCJRMEM.COM if used will work with the /C mode.

The previous edition of *Prodigy* Software required the NOBEEP utility to prevent system lock-up's. Apparently the new version works well without it, however, I have included it in my AUTOEXEC.BAT file. If you are using any other CONFIG utility remember to include SWAPCOM, or a similar file or method, to avoid the PCjr problems with COM1 and COM2.

If you have made the hardware Tandy modification, you just run the new *Prodigy* software, following the instructions as they are given on the screen, and being careful to choose the Tandy (320 X 200) option during the software installation. That's all there is to it, when you boot up, the color comes on immediately. I'm still very impressed with the *Prodigy* color graphics, it really lets the PCjr show its stuff!

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PRODIGY on the PCjr

(From Page 3)
If you do not have the Tandy
"mod" then you need to make a

patch to the *Prodigy* supplied software. The simplest way to do this is to obtain the required patch from the **PCJr**Workshop BBS by down-loading the file

PCJRDR VR.ZIP. After unzipping the file just follow instructions to change the DRIVER.SCR file in the *Prodigy*"Disk B" with the new DRIVER.SCR supplied by the PCJRDR VR file.

Another way of making the supplied software compatible with the PCjr is to modify the program yourself. This is easily accomplished using the DEBUG program. First run the *Prodigy* installation program and prepare the two "Disks A and B". The DRIVER.SCR file on "Disk B" will need to be slightly altered at location 1BAE, by changing B8 to 18.

To make the change, copy the DRIVER.SCR file and the DEBUG.COM file to a blank diskette. Type the following (the computer will prompt you), and press the ENTER key at the end of each line,

DEBUG DRIVER.SCR -e 1BAE XXXX:1BAE B\$.18

-**q**

After this has been done copy the new "debugged" DRIVER.SCR file to the Prodigy "Disk B". That's all!

The only problem that I have had with this new *Prodigy* Software on my PCjr has been Modem related. As the jr does not have DMA it can not send instructions to the Modem at the same instant it reads the disk drive. This will cause the jr not to respond to the initial software query to the modem, resulting in an error message and no dial out. *Prodigy* actually interrogates each modem

as to model type, and then re-configures the software specifically for that particular modem.

To alleviate the modern problem the Prodigy Service Center provided the remedy. Using a text editor, but NOT EDLIN, [Ed Note: Take that, Blagg!] add the following line to the CONFIG.SM file in "Disk R"

modem type:1

This line is added directly BEFORE the line starting with.

modem str:

This will provide a several second delay before the PCjr starts dialing out. The EDLIN program should not be used *[Ed. note:And that/]*, as a text editor in this case, as it is limited to lines having a maximum number of characters of 253. The line starting with modern str: has more characters than 253!

Any problems you may incur with *Prodigy* will probably be related ONLY with the modem or noisy telephone lines and NOT with the PCjr. I run my jr with an external modem at 2400 baud and only on rare occasions will a problem occur. In event of troubles *Prodigy* will show an error screen providing an explanation or error code.

After you have *Prodigy* up and running, you may need to center the display on your monitor. This is achieved by pressing the CTRL, ALT and either the left or right arrow keys simultaneously.

The *Prodigy* Handbook will provide further information on the system and how to use AUTOLOGON etc. All the features of the *Prodigy* Service are available for use by the PCjr. If you have converted the jr internal modem slot to a second serial RS232 connector then you will be able to use the mouse feature as well. The PCjr does a really super job of displaying the *Prodigy* color graphics. I particularly enjoy the weather maps.



The PCjr WORKSHOP

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Why I Like QUICKEN

by John M. King

My wife and I hate budgeting, but I've always wanted an easy way of keeping track of where our pay checks go. I don't need a program which also calculates my net worth, manages my stock portfolio, and tracks my



rental
properties.
You'd be
amazed at how
easy it is to
manage the
few stocks I
have, and the
only rental
properties I've
ever had were
apartments I
was living in.

Managing
Your Money
was a
candidate
because there

was an early PCjrcartridge version, but MYM did too much, most of which I didn't care about.

Furthermore, it took too many disks and disk swaps, particularly in later versions, and was copy protected. I wanted something simpler and better suited to a PCjrwith no hard disk.

Most of the money I want to track goes out via checks. The pocket money my wife and I spend is not a real concern. Perhaps, I could use that level of precision someday, but for now I'd just like to get the major expenditures recorded, and these are all in our checkbook.

The checkbook is both the answer and the problem. All the data is there, but it's not in an easily usable form. Searching for a contribution to charity means looking back over every check written for the year for the ones usually marked TAX or CHARITY and recording on a separate sheet of paper the appropriate information. A paper database is simple

but tedious. Computers are supposed to speed up this sort of activity.

I considered entering all my check stub information into a general purpose database program, but first, I'd have to set up the data format. Then, I'd spend double the time entering data: once in the checkbook and again in the database. It was too much work, and I never got past thinking about it.

About that time, I noticed that many of the checks I write each month are repeats of the previous month. Some are exactly the same, like the mortgage payment. Others differ only in the amount, like the credit card payments. I realized that if the check information were in the computer and could be recalled easily, I should be able to save some time entering the data. Better yet, if the computer could print the checks, I might save a significant amount of time each month as well as have a computerized database which could be searched easily.

What I had done was describe Quicken from Intuit in Palo Alto, CA. Quicken is a personal finance manager that masquerades as a checkbook program. Its simple, direct approach uses a checkbook as the model for tracking your finances. However, this computerized checkbook allows you to categorize entries and search and report what is in the database easily. Quicken is most effective when you use it to print checks as well as keep track of your checkbook entries.

When you want to write a check, Quicken provides a screen which looks like a blank check. Quicken fills in the date automatically. You fill out the name of the payee and the amount, and Quicken writes out the amount in words to match the numbers you entered. You can add a memo to be printed on the check, such as a loan number, and name a category for the check, such as Mortgage or Utilities. You can generate reports based on categories, so this makes tracking where the money goes easy.

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Why I Like QUICKEN

Quicken will "memorize" as much of this information as you want and recall it with a keystroke the next time you need to write a check to this payee. This is a convenience and big time saver.

Transactions such as deposits, automatic teller withdrawals, service charges, interest, or checks written by hand are entered in the check register. This is a *Quicken* screen which looks like the check register with your old checks. There are boxes for a check number, date, payee, amount paid, amount deposited, and whether the transaction has been cleared by the bank. All the checks you write appear here along with the entries you make directly to the register. Information can also be memorized and recalled for entries in the check register.

Quicken takes care of putting all entries in the right order by date and check number. If you forget to record a deposit until after several checks have been written, Quicken will place the deposit in the register properly for the day you actually made it.



The ability to enter data in the register makes it easy to use checks which are written by hand along with the ones which are printed by *Quicken*. I use two series of numbers. The 2000 series are my old checks from the bank, and the 5000 series are my new, pin-feed, printer checks I purchased from Intuit. The Intuit checks are magnetically encoded just like the bank checks, so all are listed in order on my monthly bank statement.

Quicken uses single-entry accounting, so it is easy to correct errors or make changes. Only the original entry needs to be changed, and you can do it any time you want. Change the amount, payee, date, or even delete or void the whole thing. Quicken makes it easy. You don't have a computer accountant looking over your shoulder making you feel guilty about changes. The Quicken approach is that it's your money, so do asyou please.

Getting started with *Quicken* is a snap. The manual is extremely well written. It is clear, concise, easy to read, and all the features are explained well. In addition, there are numerous help screens, so you don't have to memorize commands. Explanations are available on line, and the commands can be selected from menus if you forget the short-hand Control key combinations.

Now that you have the basic idea of what Quicken does and how data is entered. Let's look in a bit more detail at how Quicken's database features will help me track my expenditures.

Every transaction, printed check or check register entry, can be assigned to a category. There is a line

on the "check" form and in the register to enter the category name. You can create new categories at any time or change the name of existing categories. Quicken is very flexible in the regard.

By creating categories such as Mortgage, Medical, Charity, Utilities, Education, Groceries, Home Repair,

Entertainment, etc., I can itemize our expenditures to the degree I want. *Quicken* allows me to identify any category as tax related, so Mortgage, Medical, and Charity can be identified and printed out when I'm preparing my taxes. Although *Quicken* doesn't do taxes, it can provide the data I need in clear printed reports or in disk file format to use with tax programs like Turbo Tax.

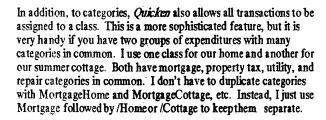
Payments, whether checks or check register entries, can be split between more than one category. This means that a credit card payment can be assigned partly to Groceries, partly to Home Repair, partly to Entertainment, etc. The split can be fixed and memorized, or changed each month. It's up to you. This flexibility makes Quicken a pleasure to use.

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Why I Like QUICKEN

(From Page 6)



Since transactions can be memorized for future use, writing the monthly mortgage or department store check is fast. Furthermore, memorized transactions can be grouped together, so *Quicken* can automatically write the entire check or, at least, write all but the amount. I have set up two transaction groups. One for the first of the month and one for the fifteenth because that's when I sit down to pay bills.

I'm not sure that I've saved any time yet, but it's more fun paying the bills using my computer. Anything that can make paying the bills less painful is wonderful. Besides, printed checks look much more professional than hand written ones. I even include charge account and loan numbers on checks now since the computer does it



for me automatically. Even reconciling my account at the end of the month is more fun. *Quicken* makes it faster and there are no more arithmetic errors to hunt down.

Best of all for PCjr owners, Quicken version 3 runs on a one disk drive machine with 384K or more RAM. There is one 360K disk for the program and one for the help file and your data. All your checkbook data for more than a year will fit on the disk with the help file. With one drive you occasionally have to swap disks. With two disk drives, there is no swapping at all.

The retail price of *Quicken* 3 is \$59.95, but it is commonly available at discount for about \$40. Checks can be purchased separately from Intuit. They cost \$38-\$43 for 250 depending upon the style. The least expensive are the wallet size checks which fit easily into the small return envelopes that come with many bills.

Enough! It's the first of the month, and I have to stop writing and print out my first of the month transaction group checks.

it's in The Book--

WHAT DO THEY MEAN BY THAT?

(As defined in Webster's New World Dictionary of Computer Terms

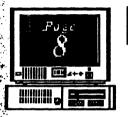


Memory: The storage facilities of the computer, capable of storing vast amounts of data. **Random Access:** The process of obtaining data from or placing data into a storage location in which access is independent of the order of storage.

Random Access Memory: A memory whose contents can be read or written on directly without regard to any other memory location. /ts acronym is...

RAM: [That 128 - 640 KB you hear about] A memory into which the user can enter information and instructions (write), and from which the user can call up data (read)....the "working memory" of the computer, into which applications programs can be loaded from outside and then executed.

Memory Management: The technique of efficiently storing and allocating memory resources. [Required for all PCir Memory Expansions]



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The Culture Corner...

THE MAVEN

by David Wilson
With insincere apologies to E.A. Poe)

Once upon a midnight beery
Words I processed, bleak and bleary
Typing many an item of forgettable lore,
Suddenly a sound of smashing
Came of someone loudly bashing
Crashing down my office door.





"What the hell!", I cried out shrilly,
"Who could ever be so silly
As to cause this huge uproar?"
And I opened up the portal,
Saw a sight to freeze a mortalP.C. Maven at my door.

"Great Zot!", I cried with pale demeanor,
"Stop cackling like a wild hyena Drooling on my office floor.
I don't want to hear the tune you're Croaking about PCjr."

Then smirked Maven,
"You need more."

"I don't!", I wailed in desperation,
"You must accept the explanation
That I've submitted o'er and o'er I have no problems that need fixes
With AT's or three-eight-sixes..."
Maven smirked, "Not three, but four."

Say what?", I howled, not comprehending Maven's concept, so mind-bending, That I couldn't with it soar.

Yes", he said, all condescending, Now's the time to be ascending

Past the three-eight-six to four!"



The silence then was so compelling
That I succeeded in repelling
Maven's minions from my door.
"Begone! I tell you that I have no need
To run my checkbook at such speed
That it scares me even more.



"I just write letters to Aunt Minnie,
Typing at the rate of twenty
Words a minute (at full bore)?
I don't even write in BASIC
Programming that causes a sick
PCjr to run slower."

I realize the time is coming
When my Junior ceases humming -,
replaced by one from Singapore;
But 'till I make that big decision
Kindly spare me your derision.
Advice from Maven? Never more!

There was more, but even Maven
Saw there was no sense in ravin',
So he tottered from my door.
Leaving me in such a state
That I could scarcely operate
A PCjr, nothing more.

++>(0)

A>DIR

Happy New Year!

by David Blagg, Ye Pres.

Want to have a delightful experience? Make your New Year's resolutions early so you are prepared to take advantage of early opporunities to make them happen. Here is what happened to me.

It is probably not a surprise to anyone, but it was clear to me that most of the re-nominated officers would be re-elected to new terms at our December meeting. Beth Geiger and Carol Burns join me in the effort to keep things going as we have for the last year. We welcome Dick Anthony, who is our new Treasurer, replacing Hunter Medney who has other commitments. (By the way, we have good wishes for Hunter, he has served our group as Founder, first President, and most recently Treasurer.) And no doubt, we will be joined by a capable group of appointed officers early in the new year.

As President, I have kept a list of monthly meeting topics since I became responsible for them late in 1989. There was only one entry for 1991. Dan Evans agreed to present session on tax programs at our January meeting (and we look forward to that timely topic early in the tax season.) After that there was nothing scheduled. That was as I thought it should be, since my term as President would come to an end. Someone else would have the responsibility. Right?

As it turned out, this New Year's resolution was tentative and taken with great hesitation: I resolved to do a better job of getting meeting topics scheduled in advance. This is not an easy accomplishment, and I welcome any help I can get.

Then it happened. At the December meeting, for reasons unknown to me, the topics flowed forth. As it turns out, we have a knowledgeable group of folks among our membership who are willing to share their experiences with all of us. And several of them will do so in the months ahead. My thanks to those who have made my resolution "do-able." In the meantime, your topic suggestions are welcome. After all, my New Year's resolution is a twelve month project.

New Expansion Products

by David Wilson, Ye Ed.

Here's some hot stuff from the Metro PCjr Journal, the newsletter of the Metropolitan Washington/Baltimore area PCjr Group.

In their December issue there's a story about some coming attractions from PC Enterprises, the developer and vendor of many PC rupgrade products. Here are a few extracts from their story:



"-Would you believe VGA color graphics for the PCjr? With this sidecar plus some system board modifications, you can use your jr monitor to experience the full 256 the creators of your games and programs intended you to see." [Ed. Note: We wonder about the resolution on a PCjr monitor-will that be improved as well?]

"-Then there's the 2400 baud internal modem for

the PCir...'

"... try the new jrBUS-Mouse, a genuine
Microsoft mouse that plugs into a sidecar." [Ed
Note: Must be an updated version of the same
thing Microsoft offered some time back; in any case,
it's marvelous as a way to save on precious Serial
Port allocations.]

"-There's also an optical scanner for the jr, a 'Turbo-Drive' solid state disk drive, a 150-watt power supply ... modifications to make the jr run better and faster, and a hard drive controller sidecar

that will run any hard drive."

We'll be waiting with eager anticipation for our catalogs; we haven't seen any of this yet, so it's all in the "hearsay" range, but the Junior Journal is about as reliable as you can get. I believe 'em - I just can't decide which item(s) to blow my Christmas money on. But I will. You know I will. The Devil makes me do it; just ask my wife.



Volume 3, Number 7. January, 1991

The Orphan Peanut

RANDOM ACCESS

Fevered Meanderings of a Disordered Brain

GOOBER PEAS

we've been hearing on 3.1 running

As you saw on Page 1, this month's lead article is about PRODIGY and the PCjr. It's significant for a couple of reasons: first(and most important to your Editor), it's by an APCjrUG member who isn't an Officer - although Zyg could be one if his schedule allowed him the time; and second, because it's the latest word on a subject I've received more than one question about. Now's your chance to look into the Sears/IBM "interactive service" if your curiosity is piqued, and Zyg confirms all those rumors

about version 3.1 running beautifully on most PCjrs with a sufficient memory upgrade. *PRODIGY* itself won't make the claim, but it will work on most expanded Juniors - in 16 colors if you have the patch available on the **PCjr WORKSHOP**, or if you have the "Tandy Mod" installed.

January's meeting will be devoted to that favorite subject, taxes.

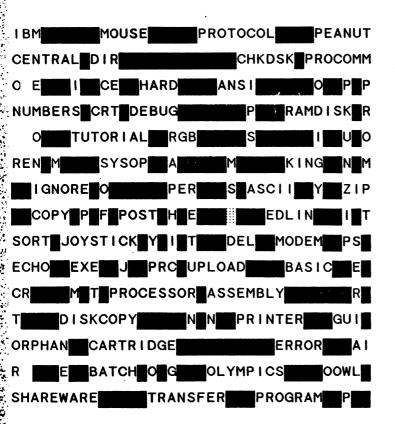
Donald Evans will show us how our computers can help us get through the annual trauma as smoothly as possible, so if you've been wondering how Junior can assist you, now's the time to find out. It's even in time to get a program and get started before the last minute ... an unheard-of

see what's available.

Right there is the solution to last month's crossword puzzle. I hope it wasn't too far out in left field for most of you, but I had a lot of fun putting it together and we'll probably do it again someday. If any of you like playing around with puzzles, we'd be happy to publish any you've created as long as there's a PCJr (or computing in general) link and we can get it loaded into First Publisher.

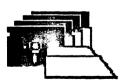
circumstance. Come on out and

Paul Rau Consulting, a company with whom I have had a very cordial relationship for several years, announced that they are cutting prices on PCjr items-Example: a 512KB *jr Hotshot* for \$149, and a 30-mb Hard Drive for \$439. Check it out if you're expanding your jr.



specifically requested.

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APC jrUG DISK LIBRARY



Please Sendyour orders to:

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Members cost: \$2.00a disk (\$5.00 for custom Disk); Nonmembers \$5.00each (No Custom)

LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE: Disk of the Month

AMY'S FIRST PRIMER: A collection of six programs written for 128-KB PCjr to help children ages 4 - 8 learn numbers and letters. Requires PCjr **BASIC** Cartridge

The Atlanta PCjr Users Group

DISK LIBRARY ORDER FORM

NUMBER	DISK NAME		PRICE		
	:		•		
APCjrUG Be	- (5 disks: \$3.00; 10 disks: \$5.00) Quantity eginners' Kit-(\$10 Members, \$15 NonMembers) andling (\$1.00 for each 5 disks ordered)				
	oe mailed to the address listed on the label e of this form unless another address is	TOTAL			

GETTING THEDE

If you're outside the Perimeter (I-285):

Justfollow 1-285 around Atlanta until you reach the Tom Moreland Interchange (1-285 and 1-85 North). Go South on I-85 toward Atlanta until you reach Exit 33,

Shallowford Road. Exit onto Shallowford Road and turn left to cross over 1-85. Immediately past the traffic signal on the East side of the

overpass you will see a building on the left with

STANCOM in latrge letters on the front of it.

If you're inside the Perimeter (1-285): Get on I-85 heading North from the city. Watch for the Shallowford Road exit, Number 33, and leave the Interstate highway there. Turn right on Shallowford Road, get in the left lane and prepare to immediately turn left into the **STANCOM** parking lot.

I-20 West

1-85 South

Exit # 33:

-75 North

Shallowford Road -

I-75/85 North (Downtown Connector)

1-85 North

The Orkhan Peanut

The Chronicle of The Atlanta PCir Users Group 6575 Amberglades Lane Atlanta. GA 30328



om Morelend Interchange STANCOM

└ I-20 East

75 South

