

Acorn Customer Services

Newsletter

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February 1992

Editorial

Welcome to issue 11 of the Customer Service Newsletter. This issue contains news about a new online support service to replace SID. Once you have read the details and tried the new service I am sure you will agree that the Acorn Technical Support BBS is a vast improvement over the previous system. Any comments regarding the system will be welcomed as we are constantly reviewing ways in which it can be further improved.

Acorn are continuing to take very seriously the increasing number of viruses found on our equipment and contained within the issue are details of a new virus. We aim to keep you up to date with news of viruses as they are detected.

Peter Dunn
Acorn Customer Services

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Acorn News

Acorn Technical Support BBS

This is a replacement for the original 'SID' bulletin board system. It is available to Acorn Dealers, Approved Service Centres and Schools.

The bulletin board contains a number of echomail conferences plus a few local conferences for dealers and schools.

There is also a section for downloadable software with Acorn utility/test software, news releases, FCOs, hints & tips, application notes and much more. A wider and faster range of download protocols means shorter and cheaper phone calls than those provided by the previous SID system.

There are also Closed User Groups (CUGs) for Dealers and Schools containing more specific information and software.

There is no charge for registration on the new system. All you need to do is call the system and enter your name and password for future calls. Fill in the relevant questionnaire and registration will be given within a single working day. On subsequent calls you will have full access to the system.

To access the system set up your communications software as follows:

```
Terminal Emulation:  ANSI
Data bits;          8
Parity:             No
Stop bits:          1

Modem speeds: v21    v22    v23    v22bis
               300/300 1200/1200 1200/75 2400/2400
```

Telephone Number: 0223 215453 24 hrs (except 07:30-8:00 am)

A disc will shortly be available to Acorn Dealers and Approved Service Centres which will enable you to download information and software from the system with almost no interaction from the user. More information on this service will be available shortly on the new bulletin board.

Virus News

The Module Virus

This is a relatively new virus, but one which spreads effectively. It works by merging its code with modules, with the only outward signs being an increase in length of nearly 1K, and a new datestamp.

It can be detected by Acorn's !Killer version 1.17 which was supplied on the disc that came with the November issue of the Customer Services Newsletter.

There are two strains of the virus, and !Killer 1.17 cannot differentiate between them. This can result in corrupted modules if version 1.17 has been used to remove the wrong strain of virus. If this occurs modules will typically give 'Bad Header Field' or 'Address Exception' errors. Do not use version 1.17 of !Killer to remove module virus outbreaks.

Version 1.26 and onwards of !Killer has the ability to remove the virus correctly. !Killer 1.26 can be downloaded from the Acorn Technical Support BBS and should be used in preference to version 1.17 for any infections.

Working on customers' machines

The danger of infecting your own equipment from viruses on machines passing through your workshop, service department etc, should be borne in mind.

We recommend using !Killer to check any functional machines before commencing work on them. Keeping VProtect resident on your own machines will also be a useful second line of defence.

Remember that opening a filer viewer is enough to cause some viruses to infect the machine!

Further information on viruses will be placed on the Acorn Technical Support BBS.

Technical Information

Printer drivers are always a popular topic of technical enquiry and we try to resolve as many enquiries as we can. The following are the most common enquiries over the last six months.

RISC OS 2 Printer Drivers

1. We have had reports of the release 2 printer drivers producing the following error message:

```
"Invalid number of output bits"
```

This error is produced when you attempt to print a sprite that was created in a 256 colour screen mode such as MODE 15 in a 16 colour mode such as MODE 12. The solution to the problem is to print in MODE 15 if this error occurs, or to print the sprite in the mode in which it was created.

2. When attempting to load any of the many RISC OS 2 Desktop printer drivers the following error message may be displayed:

```
"Filing System or path 'Printer:' not present internal error xxxx"
```

The error is caused by the one of the printer driver support modules becoming unplugged from the operating system. To resolve the problem the first action to take is to find out which modules are unplugged. This information can be found by typing the following command from the command line:

```
*UNPLUG
```

It is then necessary to re-insert the modules that *UNPLUG has shown as being unplugged with the following command:

```
*RMREINIT <ModuleName>
```

Once you have used *RMREINIT to re-initialise all the modules you should then perform a CTRL BREAK to ensure all the modules have started correctly.

3. Printing labels on small page lengths can sometimes cause problems.

a) !PrinterDM (2.46) reads a system variable called PDriver\$DMExtra at the start of each print job and sends it to the printer before the actual data stream. PDriver\$DMExtra has to be set using G\$Trans format so to set a page length of nine lines you would use:

```
*SET PDriver$DMExtra |[C|I
```

You would use |[C|J for ten lines and |[C|K for eleven lines and so on. This command can be executed explicitly from the command line (after !PrinterDM has been loaded) or incorporated in the !Run file.

b) Set the (Graphics) clip window to the appropriate size from !PrinterDM's icon bar menu. If the stationary is continuous you can leave the top and bottom graphics margins set to zero.

c) Finally you need to tell the Wordprocessor you are using the page size of each label.

RISC OS 3 Printer Drivers

Loading RISC OS 2 printer drivers into Acorn A5000s with RISC OS 3 can cause problems if an attempt is then made to load the RISC OS 3 !Printers application from the Applications 1 disc or directory if stored on the hard disc.

!Printers will report the error

```
"!Printers requires PDriver 3.16 or later"
```

The error occurs because the RISC OS 2 printer driver loads an older PDriver module than 3.16. The solution to the problem is to type from the command line.

```
*RMKILL PDriver  
*RMREINIT  
PDriver
```

This will then allow you to load the new !Printer application supplied with RISC OS 3 on the Acorn A5000.

Technical Information

Acorn A5000 Hard Disc upgrades

Since the launch of the Acorn A5000 we have received many requests for details of large capacity IDE Hard Discs that Acorn recommends for use in the Acorn A5000.

At this time Acorn is not recommending the internal hard disc is upgraded. If the customer wishes a greater storage capacity than that offered by the supplied 40MByte internal unit then an appropriate SCSI expansion should be used.

There are a number of reasons why larger second IDE hard discs should not be added to the system.

1. There is no space internally for the drive to fit and it must therefore go externally.
2. The IDE bus does not support cable outside the casing
3. The internal PSU cannot power a second hard disc.
4. There are currently NO Acorn approved larger capacity 3.5" drives that could replace the existing 40 MByte unit. It is possible that a larger drive may be approved in due course, in which case details will be provided in the Acorn Customer Service Newsletter.

Maestro

Version 1.75 has a problem where notes are displayed at double-height in certain modes. This may be fixed in the field by deleting or renaming the sprites22 and !sprites22 files.

PC Emulator Hint and Tips

1. Deleting an unformatted or non-system PC Emulator hard disc partition on an A5000.

RISC OS 3 looks at the PC hard disc partition (DOSDisc, &FC8) as if it were a filing system and therefore before it will delete the partition, it must look inside to find out what files are there. To be able to delete an unformatted partition it is necessary to fool the operating system into believing that it is not

a PC partition, by changing its filetype. It is however, not possible to change its filetype from within the desktop and the following information gives details of how to change the filetype from outside the desktop. The file can then either be deleted from the command line as shown below or from the desktop.

- a) Press function key F12 from the desktop to get the command line (* Prompt)

- b) Type:

```
*SETTYPE ADFS::4.$PC.Drive_C TEXT <RETURN>  
*DELETE ADFS::4.$PC.Drive_C <RETURN>
```

2. The Archimedes keyboard has a U.S. style PC layout. You should not therefore use KEYBUK or KEYB UK in the Autoexec batch file. Also the £ sign on an Archimedes keyboard doesn't exist on a PC keyboard, so to get a £ sign you will need to enter its ASCII code 156:

Under the emulator, hold down the ALT key and type 1 5 6 on the numeric keypad. (Remember to have Num Lock on).

3. Configuration - 'Startup Text'

The startup text is only intended for use with a hard disc partition, not for floppy based systems. The problem is that the first characters of the startup text are lost because they are taken as a reply to the 'Insert DOS Boot Disc and press any key' message which you get when running the emulator from floppy discs.

The startup text should also not be used unless you have an Autoexec.Bat and Config.Sys file. If you do not have these, then the startup text is taken as a reply to confirming the date.

4. PC Software compatibility

WordStar 4 - there are some screen redraw problems while using the !PCEmS emulator. No problems have been reported using the large !PCEm. emulator.

Acorn A5000 Servicing

We are pleased to advise that the introduction of the new Fast Track Service policy has proved to be very successful and that we expect this system to substantially increase customer satisfaction levels. One area that has not been highlighted in previous communication to you was that the Acorn **A5000** now includes a feature specifically designed to help prevent software piracy. This is the use of the DS2400 chip situated on the motherboard which has a unique ID code embedded in it and because of this it may be necessary to ensure that the same individual chip remains with the customer after any service repair.

Please therefore:

- a) Ask the customer if they are using any software which takes advantage of the ID code. If yes, endorse this on the service report when returning the machine on either a WRA or GRA.**

- b) If the feature has not been used a replacement machine can be given to the customer, providing it is within the GRA period.**

As yet this is not seen as a major issue as few of the software houses have been able to take advantage of this feature, largely due to Acorn's support scheme not being fully implemented. However it is a sensible practice to ensure that wherever possible the DS2400 chip remains with its original customer and that every effort should be made to ensure that this happens. Your co-operation in this matter is appreciated.

A5000 Service Training

The Acorn Training Centre is running a number of courses during February and March including the Acorn A5000 Module Level Servicing Course. The dates for the course are the 21st February and the 13th March. For full details of the training courses available please contact the Acorn Training Centre on (0223) 214411.

Spares & Warranty Update

Changes to Part Numbers

	OLD	NEW
IC ARM	2201,365	0700,100
IC VIDC	2201,367	0700,103
IC IOC	2201,368	0700,102
IC MEMC1a	2201,375	0700,101
Digitec Mouse Cable	0999,334	0376,370
Master Keyboard	0143,050	0143,700

Alternative spares

Cased keyboards for the Archimedes 300/400 series are no longer stock items.

An alternative is available under the part number 0386,900 but be aware this keyboard is only compatible in its cased form, the keyboard PCB's are not interchangeable.

Spares items no longer available.

Archimedes 300 Series Front Sub-moulding	0276,003
Name label Archimedes 300/440 (AKB20)	0276,106
Logo label 300 series	0276,107
logo label 440 (AKB20)	0277,107

AKF12 Monitors

A limited number of cases for the AKA12 monitor are available.
Price on application from your spares supplier.

Warranty Claims

Please ensure that when returning spares for replacement under warranty that only the item that is faulty is returned eg. keyboards, unless the casing is legitimately damaged, only the keyboard PCB should be returned for replacement and not the fully cased keyboard.