Acorn Customer Services Newsletter

Editorial

This months newsletter contains a whole host of information relating to the new and enhanced networking products released at the BETT 94 exhibition. Details of the new PocketFS software are also included.

This months disc contains an enhanced version of the RISC OS 3 Printer manager (!Printers) which I know many of you have been eagerly waiting for.

Peter Dunn
Acorn Computers Ltd

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Acorn

Acorn Information

At the BETT exhibition during January a number of new and updated products were launched by Acorn to expand and complement our current range.

Acorn Access.

Acorn Access will be a simple entry level networking system which allows disc and printer sharing. Each Acorn Access pack contains an Ethernet card specific to the computer model, a 3.5" disc containing supporting software utilities, two 2m drop leads, a T-adapter, an in-line adapter, a terminator and instructions.

With packs supplied in this configuration it is possible to set up a network using just two packs and two computers.

Acorn Access packs are available for:

A5000	Order AEH70
A3020 / A4000	Order AEH71
A3000	Order AEH72

Enclosed with the newsletter is an A4 double sided question and answers sheet which will hopefully answer all your questions regarding this new and exciting product.

AUN/Level 4 **Fileserver Release** 3.

The Level 4 Fileserver has been updated to include a number of new elements, first and foremost being the inclusion of the Acorn Application Accelerator.

The Application Accelerator complements Acorn's Level 4 Fileserver (Release 3), speeding up delivery of applications to client machines by a factor of about four.

The Application Accelerator software is supplied on floppy disc in two parts: !AAServer and !AAClient. Just double click on the appropriate icon to turn the machine into either a server or client. To export (share) applications from a server simply drag icons onto AAServer's icon on the icon bar. To access shared applications from a client station, click on AAClient's icon on the icon bar.

Applications shared over the network are read-only which has two advantages:

Clients can't write to a server station, and so can't alter the applications held there.

A server can deliver an application without needing to check access permission or file lock status, saving valuable download time.

To use the Application Accelerator, machines need to be running RISC OS 3 (version 3.10 or later) on an AUN Ethernet network.

The !Bootnet application has been updated to offer increased speed and reliability.

The !Gateway application has been altered to be more reliable when using Econet as a backbone.

An upgrade from Level 4 release 2 to Level 4 release 3 will be announced in the near future.

PocketFS

A new version of PocketFS has been developed with enhancements and improvements over the original version, as follows:

DOS FS file mapping has been added so that all files on the Pocket Book can be backed up on Archimedes computer and transferred back to the Pocket Book without the need to adjust any filenames.

More than one file can be highlighted in the conversion window, which allows multiple file copies and other operations.

Files in the conversion window can be renamed, deleted and copied.

Other improvements have also been added to make the A-Link quicker and easier to use.

Existing owners of the A-Link can obtain the new version of the PocketFS on a floppy disc for £9.95

Acorn Information

(inc. VAT and P/P). Simply send a cheque or postal order, together with your original A-Link disc to: Acorn Direct, 13 Denington Road, Wellingborough, Northants., NN8 2RL.

Cheques should be made out to 'Acorn Direct' and remember to provide your name, address and telephone number. (This offer applies to the UK only and expires on the 30th April 1994).

To find out which version of PocketFS you are currently using, start the application and select 'info' from the main menu.

Pocket Book Plotter Software

Plotter is a graphical plotting application which extends the range of use of the Acorn Pocket Book and fulfils the role of a specialist graphical calculator.

Plotter has been designed to meet all curriculum needs for use in Maths and Science Key Stage 3 and 4 onwards (age group 11 - 16), and will also cover most A-level requirements.

You can use it for plotting:
Cartesian functions
Polar functions
Inequality graphs Co-ordinate pairs
Families of functions

Plotter is supplied on an SSD memory card which can be slotted into either of the drive bays of the Pocket Book, and is accompanied by a manual.

Master 128 PCB's.

Acorn has a number of Master 128 boards which can be purchased from your normal supplier (Acorn if you have a direct account). A good discount applies over the normal RRP of £270,00 +VAT. Please contact your supplier for full details. The product code for these boards is ADT11.

Unplugging Relocatable Modules

We are aware that a number of users attempt to secure their system by unplugging various modules such as !Configure from the system using the command *UNPLUG. To ensure compatibility with future Acorn Operating Systems and computers we recommend that the guidelines set out in the inclosed application note are followed.

Technical Information

Downloading fonts to PostScript printers.

When printing to PostScript printers, various applications handle fonts in different ways under RISC OS 3.

Applications such as Acorn DTP will display a selected font on screen if DTP has been configured correctly and then when the print action takes place it will assume that the font is resident within the printer and send mapping information. If the printer or printer manager does not have any knowledge of the font then the text in that particular font will be printed in the default printer font.

Applications such as Impression have been updated to fully understand the RISC OS 3 printer driver which can provide information back to the application such as the fonts resident within the printer and the downloaded fonts. These applications can therefore, if necessary, download the font on the fly to the printer with the document.

A six word Impression document is 18K in size if the font you are using is resident in the printer. If the application has to download the font then the file size is over three times as large. This will obviously have a serious impact on the printing time of a document. It should be noted that when each font is downloaded, memory within the printer is consumed. It is possible, therefore, that insufficient memory may be left within the printer to print complicated documents.

Technical Information

A remedy for this is to use the !FontPrint application to download the required font(s) to the printer and then the downloaded font will remain in the printer until it has been switched off.

!FontPrint allows the user to choose the appropriate font and then add this to the list of recognised fonts. !FontPrint ties itself in with !Printers so that when the machine which will be performing the download is started and !Printers is run, the Password for the printer will be requested and, if entered correctly, the font will be downloaded.

In the one system one printer situation the problem is easily solved by both pieces of equipment being switched on in the morning and the !FontPrint application downloading the required font at "start of day"

On a network it is necessary for the other systems on the network to be aware that the printer contains the appropriate font. This can be achieved by altering the mapping file within the !Printers application. The file you will need to alter can be found in the directory, '!Printer.ps.printers' and will most likely be called '0'. This file should be loaded into !Edit and then the new mapping information can be added to the bottom of the mapping list.

Each font downloading will be given the prefix 'DL_' and this must be used when mapping the RISC OS fontname eg.

If the font Primary was downloaded then the mapping entry would be:

Primary DL_Primary   -
A mapping entry for Blade would be:
Blade DL_Blade

Spares / Service Info

Old FCO Demise.

From the 1st May 1994 the following listed Field Change Orders will no longer be chargeable to Acorn. All claims must be submitted and received by the 1st May 1994. After this date the FCO's can be carried out by Acorn Approved Service Agents and then the customer charged appropriately. If you have any customers who express concern over this then please contact Customer Services. The terminated FCO's are applicable to either the A300 series or the old A440.

FCO E008 Excessive background noise from speaker
FCO E009 RGB sync levels to low

FCO E011 Reduce video noise

FCO 2000 Winchester circuitry improvements
FCO 2002 Spurious Parallel Line Feed problem
FCO 2003 Serial Port

A4000 Keyboard- keycap fault.

We are aware that a small number of A4000 keyboards may contain faulty keycaps. The fault is shown by the character legend wearing off the key. If you find you have one of these keyboards in or out of warranty please contact our warranty returns department who will arrange for replacement keycaps to be sent.

AKF18 Returns.

If you are returning AKF 18 monitors for repair it is essential to ensure the monitor is packed in its original box (or another AKF18 box). The Monitor stand must also be removed from the base of the monitor and packed correctly. If the stand is not removed damage can be caused to the stand and the monitor casing while in transit.

A3000 Keyboard Encoder price.

The A3000 keyboard encoder price will increase with immediate effect and will also cover all back orders.

0280022 A3000 Keyboard Encoder £14.00

!Printers version 1.22 Update

New RISC OS 3 printer manager

The enhanced printer manager is designed to run on RISC OS 3.10 or later and in at least 2MBytes of RAM.

Included with this month's Newsletter is a new version of the RISC OS 3 printer manager. This new version comes out of many discussions with Acorn Education Dealer and Acorn Education Centres. We have taken on board many of your comments and we hope that the facilities provided by this new version will answer most of the criticisms.

Disc Contents

!Printers Application
!System Application
!Scrap Application
Directory 'Printers' containing printer definition files.

Installation

To provide the bug fixes and extra functionality to !Printers it is necessary to provide some updated modules on the new disc. !System contains an updated version of the ColourTrans module. Use the !SysMerge application to update your current version of !System. A new version of PDumperSupport is loaded automatically by !Printers when needed.

What's New?

The following changes have been made to !Printers:

1. 'background' printing. This very useful feature has been added to the printer manager. In effect, this causes printing to be directed to a spool file for files in the queue, after which the spool file is then sent to the printer as a background activity. Since not all applications support queueing of printing, this feature will not work with all applications. Background printing is an option selectable in the 'Connection' dialogue box.

2. Improved colour printing support. Acorn has been working in conjunction with third parties to design and develop new ColourTrans and PDumperSupport modules. In addition to better colour rendition at the 256 colour level, the drivers now provide support for 24bpp colour rendition through the use of a three pass system. This is done transparently to the application and the user. Applications which can make use of this include Draw and Artworks. ! Paint will not print in colour using 16 million colours option. Sprites can be printed from !Draw if you want to print using this option.

3. New and improved printer definition files. We have a number of new printer definition files for colour and black and white printers. Drivers for the Hewlett Packard Deskjet 500C, 550C and 1200C have been included; the 550C driver will also work correctly for the Deskjet 310 colour. The BJC600 has been included as an additional PDF. New black and white dot matrix PDFs have been included for various printers. The Epson Stylus 800 has been included with its own PDF which will also support the other printers in the Stylus range. The original PDFs supplied have been improved to provide higher resolution colour printing options. The lists of supported printers supplied within each manufacturer directory has been significantly updated with information supplied by the manufacturers to include nearly 300 printers in total.

4. Reduced disc swapping. Single floppy drive users have suffered from the overlaying system employed in previous versions of the printer manager. For users of dot matrix or laserjet class printers, the necessity to re-insert the printer driver disc has been removed. This should alleviate a lot of problems for the floppy disc system users within schools. When printing to PostScript printers it will however, still be necessary to insert the original printer driver disc.

5. Sensible default options. The PDF's will now load with more popular default options selected. Printers that print in colour only will select colour and sensible resolution options when they are loaded thus reducing the amount of conflguration required when the printer manager is flrst set up.

6. PostScript printing. Various changes have been made to PostScript printing, including standardising the PostScript output.

7. Printing with Acorn Access. !Printers has been updated for use with the new Acorn Access package. A new option from the Printer Control menu allows the 'Shared' option to be selected if Acorn Access is installed. Please refer to the Acorn Access notes for further information.

8. New templates. Both 2D and 3D templates are provided. Selection is dependant on the setting of bit 1 of byte &8C in CMOS RAM. There is therefore no requirement for the application be updated with the sprites and template provided by !NewLook.

9. File Output. It is now possible to append to file thus a new printout to a previous 'output' file.

10. Printing 'Output' files. When printing 'Output' files created when printing for a dp class printer, the problem whereby an address exception could occur at the end of the print cycle has now been fixed.

11. Paper size editing. The 'Edit Paper Size' option now selects the paper type that is configured for that particular printer driver.

12. Cancelling a print job. When the Escape key is used to stop a print job the printer manager will now send a reset to the printer. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the printer is online when escape is pressed.

13. Loading PDF's. New PDF's loaded into the printer manager will now be automatically installed onto the icon bar so the user does not have to specifically make them active.

14. Look. Various changes have been made to the printer manager to make it more Style Guide compliant, eg the removal of dbox close buttons and the addition of 'Cancel' buttons.

Distribution

The enhanced RISC OS printer manager may be freely distributed in its complete form with its supporting applications, directories and documentation. Any people wishing to make this disc available on any public access on-line system or via public domain, careware or shareware service should contact Acorn in writing at the address below for licensing details. The RISC OS printer nanager '!Printers' and the associated files remains copyright of Acorn Computers Ltd.

Feedback

If you experience any problems contact us, preferably in writing, to the address below with the following details:

Printer being used.
Version of flrmware fitted to the printer.
If the printer is Laserjet or PostScript how much memory is installed in the printer.
Which Acorn computer system is being used.
Full description of the problem including, preferably, a copy of the !Printer application, on disc, that is causing the problems.

Customer Services '
Printers'
Acorn Computers Ltd
Acorn House
Vision Park
Histon
Cambridge, CB4 4AE

Acorn.

Acorn Access
Questions and answers

Q. What is Acorn Access?
A. Acorn Access is an "easy" network system, which allows the sharing of hard discs and printers over a network.

Q. Who would benefit from it?
A. It is designed specifically for those making their first steps into networking, from primary schools to small business users. Its simplicity belies its powerful features and flexibility, so it will also be popular in sophisticated network environments.

Q. Why was it developed?
A. Many users do not need the full facilities of a file and print server machine, but do need a means of sharing data, applications and printers between machines. Traditional networks require some expertise to set up properly, and of course, additional hardware. An Acorn Access network is designed to be " plug and play" requiring no special knowledge and no fileserver, but giving all the advantages of a network: it gets rid of floppy discs in the classroom, allows single copies of software to reside in one place and allows resources to be shared, resulting in lower overall costs and management overheads.

Q. What do I need for a Acorn Access network?
A. For each Archimedes you will need an Acorn Access network card pack, which contains all you require to connect a machine to a neighbouring one. The Archimedes must have at least 2MBytes of RAM, and be running RISC OS 3.1 or later.

Q. What do I get in my Network pack?
A. You get an Ethernet card (either for A3000, A3020/A4000 or A5000), two drop cables, a T-Piece, Inline adaptor and terminator, to allow simple networks to be put together in a flexible manner. You also get a single card 'manual' and installation instructions. A floppy disc is supplied which has an updated copy of !Printers to allow remote operation, and a new copy of !Scrap to cope with the non-Econet style addressing scheme.

Q. Will it work with BBCs and Masters?
A. No. It is Archimedes only.

Q. How many stations can I link in a Acorn Access network?
A. The IEEE standards state that 30 stations is the maximum that you may place on a single thin Ethernet segment, however, Acorn recommends a maximum of 20 machines per segment, depending upon the load under which that segment will be placed. In the case of Acorn Access, we would recommend that optimum performance is achieved when no more than 5 or 6 machines share a single hard disc. It is quite permissible to share 3 or 4 discs between 15 machines on the same network segment, for example.

Q. Can I share my printers too?
A. Yes, Acorn Access allows the standard !Printers application to access remote printers.

Q. Do I have to share my printer and hard disc?
A. No. You can choose whether to share or not, using intuitive options in the standard menus.

Q. If I share my disc, can someone else on the network delete its contents?
A. There are two modes of sharing a hard disc, 'protected' and 'unprotected'. If you only want a hard disc to be used for loading applications, for example, then you can share it in a safe manner.

Q. Can I link into an existing Level4 network?
A. Yes. You will need to set station numbers on each machine to do this. Then you may run both Acorn Access and Level4 at the same time, if you wish.

Q. Can I use Acorn Access networking across a large site?
A. Acorn Access has been designed for small clusters of machines, and the special messages that pass between machines to tell them what resources are available will not cross AUN Gateways.

Q. What happens if machines are switched on or off that are sharing a disc or printer?
A. Acorn Access has been specifically designed to cope with a changing network, and the resources that may be available on the network are expected to be dynamic.

Q. Will I need a hard disc on a machine that is sharing a printer?
A. Yes. Data sent to a printer will be stored temporarily in a local copy of !Scrap, and this must be on a local hard disc, and not on a remote machine.

Q. Are the cables and connectors supplied good enough for a permanent installation, or should I consult my network specialist?
A. The drop leads and T-Pieces are fine for a bench-style set up. However, if you have a physically large network you would be advised to seek professional advice and assistance.

Q. What documentation do I get with Acorn Access?
A. The 'manual' is a single A4 sized card, which should tell you all you need to know about Acorn Access networking. Another card has details of how to fit the network card. For the more adventurous, a leaflet contains details of some more advanced features.

Q. Can I share the SCSI disc from my A540?
A. Yes you can, but at the first release of the product, only the normal ADFS disc (including Acorn IDE drives) will be shareable directly from the filer menu. For other discs, a command is required to be inserted into a boot file, as explained in the leaflet.

Q. How does Acorn Access handle scrap files?
A. !Scrap can be held on any hard disc and used by any client machine. If !Scrap is being shared by a disc that is Protected, then you must ensure !Scrap has both public read and write set. Remote clients will then add their subdirectories as required, transparently.

Q. Is Acorn Access as fast as Level 4 for loading applications?
A. Although it has not been specifically optimised for application loading, Acorn Access will load applications faster than Level 4 Release 2, and at a speed comparable with Level 4 Release 3.

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