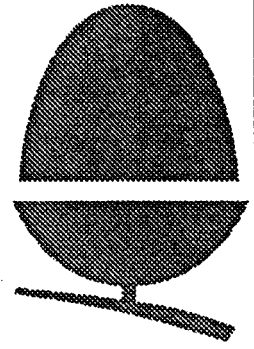


ISV Department news from Acorn

No. 17 February 1990



1990 has got off to such an active start that this newsletter brings to you somewhat belated greetings for a prosperous New Year.

New Technical Director

Malcolm Bird has joined Acorn as Technical Director. Malcolm is fully aware of the value and importance of independently developed software and peripherals in the marketplace. Malcolm's restructuring of Acorn's Technical Division will help to ensure that key developers receive due attention in line with Acorn's market needs.

The Sales and Marketing operations have been brought together under one director, Sam Wauchope. Business Unit Managers focus Acorn's sales and marketing thrust on specific market areas; Education, Consumer and Special Needs, Value Added (complete solutions for industry etc.) and International.

Application notes and development software

We hope to put more resource towards extending the range of support tools and documentation. To this end we would welcome input from you on the attached questionnaire indicating areas that could be enhanced to enable applications to be produced efficiently by both new and experienced developers in the RISC OS environment.

Please let us know if there are areas where you would find it helpful to have an application note to amplify or extend information given in the RISC OS Programmer's Reference Manual or where you feel information is omitted from the manual. (Likewise please let us know if there are items of software, which would be useful to you as developers and which you wish we had provided.) A questionnaire is enclosed requesting your input. We would be grateful if you would complete it and return it to me.

As part of our effort to extend the documentation and support tools available we would like to consider your suggestions.

Price and availability changes

Will those of you who qualify for discounted equipment please note that the prices of Stacking Filestores have changed (AEH36 RRP £799 inc VAT; AEH37 RRP £999 inc VAT). Please check the ISV prices before ordering these. Archimedes 310 (AKB15) and Archimedes 310M (AKB30) are no longer available.

o New products:

New products relevant to you which are now available are:

- AKA55 - MIDI Upgrade for AKA16, MIDI Expansion card RRP: £17.25 inc VAT
- AKA54 - MIDI upgrade for AKA12, User Port/MIDI for A3000 RRP: £11.50 inc VAT
- AKJ75 - A3000 Technical Manual (described below) RRP: £29.95
- SKF01 - Font Starter Pack RRP: £51.75 inc VAT
- SKF02 - Newhall Font Pack RRP £51.75 inc VAT

These are available to be ordered in the usual way. In all other respects, the August 1989 ISV price list stands.

o MIDI ROM upgrades

Upgrades for each of the three Acorn MIDI products are now available from stock. The revised ROM code fixes a few bugs highlighted by developers and also adds some detailed new features explained in the documentation supplied with the ROM. It is likely that anyone producing a music application using MIDI will wish to inform the customer of the upgrades which are available from Dealers. As mentioned above, two of these upgrades are available to ISVs and IHVs who qualify for discounts.

o A3000 Technical Manual

This manual provides a wealth of information, some of which is also relevant to Archimedes hardware platforms, about the machine hardware and its architecture and interfaces. It includes an A3000 circuit diagram and circuit descriptions. The manual will be of use to those

third parties designing add-on products for the A3000. It will also be of general interest to those wanting to know more about how the A3000 works.

o **Font Starter Pack**

The Font Starter pack and the Newhall Font Pack, each of which includes the Outline Font Manager, are now available. The Font Starter Pack offers three typefaces (Trinity, Homerton and Corpus) in each of four styles as supplied with the Acorn Desktop Publisher and the Newhall Pack contains the Newhall typeface in the four styles, bold, bold italic, medium and medium italic. This makes it possible for users to purchase outline fonts which they can use with your products. Further packs are in preparation. These will include a Symbol font (available 2nd Quarter 1990).

The ISV Software Library

It is a prerequisite for inclusion in Acorn catalogues of third party products that a library copy of each product to be described is lodged with the ISV Department. The library copy provides "proof" of the product's availability - insurance for Acorn, for the software house and for the user. Recent news items in the magazines regarding a company recently advertising non-existent products for Archimedes should serve as an illustration of why such insurance is necessary.

In addition to the above, Acorn staff wishing to assess a product's suitability for demonstration, recommendation to friends or clients, or simply for purchase, use the library copies for their assessment. It is disadvantageous to you if that software product is out-of-date and does not work effectively. Please ensure that the library is kept up-to-date. It is not necessary, in the case of an update, to supply a complete package unless there is a substantial change; a replacement disc and/or documentation as appropriate will suffice. Please note that this is the prime library resource within Acorn.

General News and Information

o **Acorn's SCSI expansion card AKA30**

Those developers using the Acorn SCSI card with their development system may wish to know of a small problem that has been discovered with the PAL chip on the card. Under some circumstances where the card is used in conjunction with other cards, disc data may become corrupted. New PAL code has been produced, and a replacement PAL can be supplied upon request to me.

o **Support Disc**

The Support Disc, which is currently supplied with RISC OS upgrades (AKA 62), A3000 systems and the Archimedes 400/1 series, will not be included with computers manufactured after April 1990.

Please be aware that you should be prepared to offer upgrade support as provided on that disc to people upgrading your earlier Arthur-based products for RISC OS operation.

o **Technical Queries**

At all times, we endeavour to give response to technical queries as soon as possible. Resource is limited, however, so we may not always be able to help in the timeframe you hope for, but we will do our best.

International markets

As mentioned in the last newsletter, Acorn is pursuing a number of overseas markets. Currently there are three field trials underway in Canada, two in English-speaking schools and one in a French-speaking school. At that distance, they have some difficulty in assessing the merits of available software. Dorothy Netherwood, education specialist at Olivetti Canada Ltd, PO Box 3710, 160 McNabb Street, Markham, Ontario, L3R 6G9, Canada, would be happy to receive software for evaluation for use in Canadian schools. She will pay for the packages she wishes to keep and return any others. This is your opportunity to penetrate another education market - and also to consider specific language versions (in this case, French).

o **International Keyboard Handler Generator**

IKHG, the International Keyboard Handler Generator, is available, as a resource, for those of you who need it. As is usual with Acorn in-house software, it is supplied 'as is', unsupported with only on-disc documentation. If you intend to 'internationalise' your software and provide a different keyboard layout, you may find it helpful. Please send a disc formatted to E format if you require a copy.

Special Needs

Krys Boughey, in her new special-needs dedicated role, is keen to make contact with any independent hardware or software developers addressing the area of special needs ... as long as they are not addressing Acorn hardware locations directly! This is with a view to establishing a special needs developers' forum, which should help avoid duplication of effort in this field, encourage common

standards in order to achieve consistency in the look and feel of applications and operation of hardware add-ons.

Krys is particularly interested in Archimedes/A3000 developers meeting together in order to exchange information and experiences but would also like to hear about any on-going Master-based developments for inclusion in a special needs publication at a later date.

Please respond to Krys at Acorn Computers Ltd, Fulbourn Road, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 4JN outlining the area of development, target age group, targetted disability group(s) and in the case of software, switch interfacing options.

Marketing news

o CTW

Computer Trade Weekly, the leading trade magazine for the home and small business computer markets, publishes each week a Release Schedule of forthcoming leisure software. The schedule is updated weekly and each entry is paid for at a preset rate depending upon the number of entries. The standard rate is £3.00 per entry per week. The rates reduce as the number of entries increases.

The main users of the schedule are retailers and distributors. Contact Inter-Mediates for details: Inter-Mediates Limited

2 South Block
The Maltings
Riverside Way
Sawbridgeworth
Herts, CM21 9PG

Tel: 0279 726585

This is an inexpensive way way to advertise your new products to a wide range of dealers and prospective users.

o Software running in emulation under !65Host and !65Tube

It has been suggested that a list of software known to run under the 6502 emulators could be listed on Acorn's Support Information Database. If you have 6502 products which will run under !65Host or !65Tube that you would like to advertise in this way, please list them in !Edit together with details of how they may be obtained (including any "upgrade" offers to existing users) and send the Edit file to The SID Editor, Acorn Computers Ltd, Fulbourn Road, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 4JN.

Courses and Conferences

o Courses in Acorn's Training Centre

Information is enclosed about courses relevant to ISVs and IHVs which will be held in the Acorn Training Centre in the next few months.

o Acorn Networks '90

A news sheet is enclosed giving advance notice of the above conference. Based on the successful Econet conferences of the eighties, Acorn Networks '90 expands to cover not only education but also areas beyond that field.

Feedback from our users

o Speech

The true potential of the Archimedes system's processing power and sound capability has yet to be realised in the form of a range of Text-to-speech software and speech recognition hardware/software. If anyone is developing or is thinking of developing such applications, could they please let me know.

o Primary software

Although many RISC OS applications have extensive features available through menu options, our feedback tells us that primary schools would often prefer a more limited menu selection; particularly when the application is first introduced to a group of children. Perhaps more software writers could consider installation options that allow for a choice of complexity.

Future developments at Acorn

o RISC OS

Development of RISC OS at Acorn is a continuous process. Minor additions will be made available in the same manner as the RISC OS Extras disc sent to you in October 1989. No change to the ROM set is expected in 1990 despite rumours to the contrary in the press.

Hardware developers should note that increased functionality in the ROM set will probably result in the use of larger ROMs. Owners of A3000 and 400/1 machines should be able to use these larger ROMs without machine modification. 310 owners should also be able to take advantage of future larger ROMs by choosing memory upgrades which include ROM sockets ready to accept them.

o Sprite file formats

In line with Acorn's strategy of supporting standards, it is likely that new file formats will be introduced for bit-mapped information. These will be based on current industry de facto standards; T1FF is a likely contender. The existing Paint file format will remain, with the new formats being recommended where connectivity with non RISC OS platforms is needed. The new formats will also

address the need for file compression standards within the RISC OS world, particularly in the future where yet higher resolution colour images will be used. Work continues on the ChangeFSI file conversion application, and copies of the current version can be obtained via SID or on disc if a formatted disk is mailed to me. You should request a binary licence if you wish to use ChangeFSI on a product to be made available commercially. As described in Newsletter No.15, September/October 1989, you should expect to pay a nominal charge for such a licence

News from independent developers

o Next Technology - CD ROM

Many of you will have visited the Acorn stand at the British Education Technology and Training exhibition and seen Next Technology's CD ROM demonstration.

Next Technology are producing a disc of text and graphics for demonstration purposes. They would like to receive any copyright-free demos and/or text for inclusion on the CD. Please contact David Bradbury at Next, as soon as possible, if you have items to offer.

Next Technology
Dirac House
St John's Innovation Centre
Cowley Road
Cambridge

It is essential that you have the legal right to give the material to Next. Naturally, Next have the right to refuse to include any material offered.

o Aleph One - ARM3

ARM3, while not currently included in any standard Acorn hardware platform, is nevertheless available on an add-on board from Aleph One, with the promise of additional products from other suppliers. In general, well written applications will work without modification with ARM3 and be able to take advantage of the speed increase. There are some situations, where small changes to an application can further enhance this speed increase.

Aleph One's address is:

Aleph One Limited
The Old Courthouse
Bottisham
Cambridge
CB5 9BA
Tel: 0223 811679

Fax: 0223 812 713

Sue Wall
ISV Product Manager

Acorn Computers Ltd
Cambridge Technopark
645 Newmarket Road
Cambridge
CB5 8PD

o Enclosures:

Developers' questionnaire
Acorn Networks '90 news sheet
Information about courses in Acorn's Training Centre