Developers' Newsletter
No 36 December 1994

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General News

Greetings

We send you greetings from all of us at Acorn Developer Support at the end of 1994. We wish you a successful 1995.

Order form

A Drawfile of the Registered Developers' Order Form is on Developers' Disc 36. Please print out the form and complete one each time you make an order and do not include either Special Offers or items supplied directly Developer Support on the same order form. Don't forget to send payment with your order which should be clearly marked on the outside of the envelope 'FAO Developer Support'. Details of the address and how to order are on page 3 of the Developers' Discount Price List.

In addition, if your order is less than £100, please include a £5 plus VAT handling charge.

Also on the disc is a copy of the Drawfile for the Standing Order Mandate. You should complete one of these if you wish to purchase a Risc PC over a period of twelve months. This offer is only available to UK Developers. You may buy one Risc PC only at a time by this method. To find out the monthly payment, divide the standard Developer price (NOT Special Offer price) inclusive of VAT by twelve. If it does not divide equally, please add the odd pence to the first instalment.

Voicemail

If you call in and hear a recorded message, please do use the voicemail facilities. We do listen to them and respond as soon as we can. Do try to be clear about who you are (including from which company) and what it is you want. We can then deal with any queries before calling back with an answer.

1995 Subscriptions

1995 Registered Developer subscriptions fall due on 1 January 1995. Invoices will be sent to you in January. We would be grateful if you would send your subscriptions promptly to Developer Support. Please note that the subscription has remained the same for the last three years. Developers who joined the scheme for the first time after 1 September 1994 will not be asked to pay again in January 1995.

Product Directory

Thank you to all of you who keep us regularly updated with new and revised reference copies of your products and with information for the directory. For those of you who had products in previous directories but haven't responded to our requests for update, we have tried to call you all. If we've been unsuccessful, if we've not received an update in 1994 or if you've been unable to provide reference copies (software) or reference site details (hardware) then we have removed your products from the database. If we have problems contacting you, so will customers and that reflects badly on the whole Acorn community.

For those of you with access to Impression Style, on Developers' Disc 36 you will find a copy of the Product Directory Information sheet (both sides) so that you can print one whenever you need to. Please use this version rather than any earlier ones.

BETT

Don't forget the BETT Show, the major Educational technology show in the UK, which is to be held at Olympia in London from 11-14th January 1995.

From our Australian Office

Glenda Graham would be grateful if Developers would send her press releases of new products. Acorn Australia regularly releases press releases on new third party products and these are well received by the Australian press.

Dates for the 1995 Acorn Conference and the Australian National Computers in Education Conference are given below. All developers would be welcome. Please contact Glenda Graham in Melbourne for further information. The fax number in Melbourne is +61 3 419 3033.

1995 Acorn Conference
Saturday 8th July to Sunday 9th July
Venue: Hale School, Perth. W.A

1995 Australian Computers in Education Conference
9th July - 13th July (Conference starts at 6pm on the 9th)
Venue: The Hyatt Regency, Perth. W.A
Theme: Learning without Limits.

Licences for Replay decompression software

If you wish to obtain the latest released version of Replay, it can be found in the Replay Starter Kit which is listed on the Developers' Price list. Please remember that, if you wish to distribute copies of the decompression software, you need a licence to do so. The fee is £100 exc VAT and you are required, in addition to the usual acknowledgements, to include the Replay logo on your promotional material and packaging. As for all licences to distribute Acorn copyright code, you should formally contact Developer Support to request a licence for Replay. Please don't leave this until the last minute since things such as technical queries are given a higher priority.

Training for Developers

Garry Neale, our Training Manager has asked me to enquire of you whether there are any training courses you feel Acorn could arrange to meet your company's training needs. If there are courses you believe could help you as a Registered Developer, please contact Garry at Acorn House. Acorn's training course fees are kept realistically low and the courses are generally considered to be of very good value.

Technical News

Aquarius Beta

Thank you to those of you who have sent in comments and faults relating to the Aquarius beta release. We hope to provide an update set of discs in the New Year.

Use of the Territory Manager

Applications should always talk to the Territory Manager to determine which delimiters, currency symbols, decimal points, sort sequences etc. the user has selected. Applications should not specifically select these themselves. Date, time and upper/lower case conversions should be addressed in a similar manner.

OS_SpriteOp 52 Put Sprite Grey Scaled

It is our belief that this SW1 call is obsolescent. It is therefore planned that it will be removed from the next release of RISC OS.

Acorn would like to know of any developers still using this call. Any sufficiently good reason for retaining it will be considered.

Wimp_TextOp

The Programmer's Reference Manual says that the SWI call "Wimp_TextOp" (reason code 2, RenderText) takes a control terminated string. When using system text, the wimp passes this string straight onto OS_Write0 i.e. it needs to be zero terminated. Therefore, when using Wimp_TextOp, make sure that strings are zero terminated.

SWI Cache Flush

The SWI "Cache_Flush" is only available on ARM 2 and ARM 3 machines. This is because on the Risc PC the cache is arranged differently and so the command is not needed.

Printer

The new printer manager (v I.24 as supplied on the RISC OS 3 Upgrade Disc 1 sent to you with Developers Newsletter No 35) will generate an error if an attempt is made to copy a file to the printer : e.g. *copy <file> printer:

In some cases, depending on the flags, this will generate an error. The workaround is to use the F (force) option in the copy command.

FileCore

After much investigation Acorn is making a small change to the interface specification of FileCore. The change involves the addressing of data on the disc. Currently this address is passed as a 32bit quantity and is the drive number and a byte offset. This is changing to the drive number and a logical block number. This increases the range of addressible data. Although this would theoretically lead to a 256GB maximum disc size, the structures of FileCore prevent this (since they were optimised fora maximum of 512MB). The maximum size we are recommending is 4GB. A 'new structure disc' can be identified by looking at the disc size record. Both SWI HileCore_DiscOp and SW1 HileCore_MiscOp will be re-coded to distinguish between the two types of disc.

Task shutdown protocol

Please note that applications should check a flag in the wimp message block sent round to determine whether they should return a Ctr1 Shift FI2 keypress to restart the closedown sequence. The flag bit concerned is documented in the RISC OS 3 PRMs, pages 3-231/2.

Risc PC Make Modes

On Developers Disc 36, you will find a copy of the Make Modes software for Risc PC. Also on the disc, for those of you who have a copy of Impression Style, is a compressed copy of the manual for MakeModes. You should use Squash (as supplied with RISC OS 3.n) to decompress the file. If you do not have Style but require the documentation, please contact Developer Support.

Application Notes

Further to the information in Newsletter 35, Application Note 263 has not yet been written and 266 has been discontinued. We apologise for the error.

PRM Errors and Omissions

A plain text version of the Appendix to the Risc PC PRM (volume 5) is provided on Developers' Disc 35 for your information. The Appendix details the errors in and omissions from earlier volumes of the RISC OS 3 PRM. We are placing this text in the public domain as a service to existing PRM owners who have not purchased Volume 5.

Developers' Disc 36 contents

Developers' Disc 36 contains the following directories:

MakeModes

MakeModes application for Risc PC users together with documentation in Impression Style format compressed with Squash.

Ordering

Drawfiles of the Registered Developers' order form and Standing Order mandate.

PRMvol5

Errata and amendments from Programmer's Reference Manuals as published *as an* Appendix in volume 5 of the **RISC OS 3 PRM.**

ProdDirect

Two files in Impression Style format providing the two sides of the Product Directory Information forms, *PDirForm9* is the first side for product name, company name and address, product pricing and other details; *Impcateg9* is the obverse and lists the directory categories.

News from other sources

From Iota Software

Iota's 'The Complete Animator' is a desktop-based *film* editor which allows users to create films in any mode *as a* series of frames. The frames are in effect compressed sprites all of the same size, depth etc. The frames can be painted directly within the application but may also be captured from other applications by saving to The Complete Animator as Sprite, Draw, ArtWorks or ACE film.

In addition a simple protocol for making direct links to another application is also present. This is used for linking to Iota's scanner applications. Clicking the 'Grab frame from...' button in Animator allows scanned images to be requested and added to the film. The images are then held in a compressed format. Iota are keen for other Developers to support this protocol, especially those producing video digitisers, scanners, paint programs or any graphical application which could be used to produce meaningful animations.

The Complete Animator's file format, which is based on ACE Computing's ACE film format, now supports sound. Iota are preparing a set of programmer's notes for those application authors wishing to support the format directly. There is also a Replay decompressor (type 500) which is distributed with The Complete Animator, supporting Replay films generated by the package. For further information contact:

Stuart Payne: spayne@iota.co.uk
Tel: 01223 566789

Aspex Software

Aspex have taken over some of the software previously marketed by ExpLAN, namely ArchiTech, Spex, Tabs and Arcol. They have asked us to inform Registered Developers that there are some general filetypes to which they are willing to provide open access. The filetypes in question are *as* follows:

&BB5 'Searchfile' which is a general filetype that can hold compressed <u>darn,</u> with an optional descriptive file and/or keyword list.

&CD5 'Tabs' which is the file format for the product Tabs.

The ArchiTech filetype is also available but is subject to continuous development currently, to take account of 24-bit sprites, more editing, new tools, etc.

If you require details of any of these, you should contact Nick Sanham at Aspex. We have his permission to supply details of the Tabs and Searchfile formats from Developer Support but in view of the changing nature of the ArchiTech filetype, it would be inapproriate for us to supply the information on this one.

Aspex Software, Heather House, Down Road, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9AG (Tel: 01822 611060; Fax: 01822 611061)

Enclosures:

Developers' disc 36

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