C O M A L
IN THE CLASSROOM

Optimus Graphic Design, Cambridge
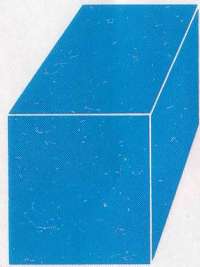
APP 47

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C O M A L

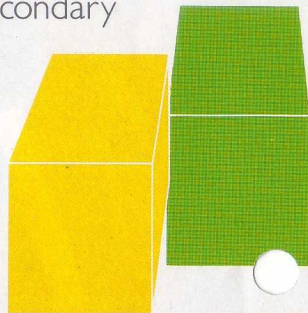# A STRUCTURED LANGUAGE THAT TEACHES PROGRAMMING SKILLS

An increasing number of European countries are choosing COMAL for use in their schools, because this versatile structured language is so ideally suited to the teaching of up-to-date programming skills.

To take advantage of these important markets, and to support the acceptance of the BBC Microcomputer and the Acorn Electron* for use in education in these countries, Acornsoft has developed a full version of COMAL which fully exploits all the superlative features of the Acorn machines.

COMAL was developed in Denmark by Borge Christensen and has now been chosen for use in education in the following countries: Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland.

The immediate attraction of COMAL in the secondary school context is its simplicity of use – without sacrifice in terms of power. It is also an extremely articulate language which uses a large degree of conventional English, making it readily accessible to the novice programmer.
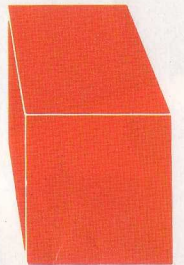
IT'S POWERFUL

The structured nature of Acornsoft COMAL creates a stimulating teaching environment in which children can experiment with pre-prepared procedure 'blocks' without needing to understand at the outset how they work.

COMAL then encourages children to acquire programming skills by its user friendliness. For example, the shorthand approach of COMAL cuts out the confusing GOTO instructions required by less sophisticated languages. Instead it provides a comprehensive range of control structures, including WHILE loops and multiple choice CASE statements.
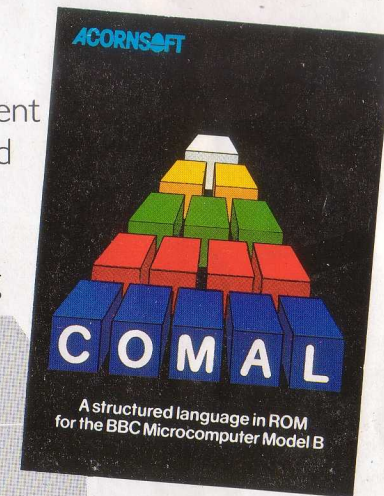
Acornsoft COMAL also offers the facility of closing structures, which means that single procedures can be run safely without causing side effects to other parts of the program. At the same time all types of data, including arrays, can be passed quickly from one procedure to another.

Random access facilities offered by COMAL make file handling fast and easy. Data can be structured and manipulated simply by using an extensive set of commands, which represent a significant advance on the more laborious serial access approach to file handling that some other languages use.

IT'S FRIENDLY

Acornsoft COMAL offers a friendly environment for writing and maintaining properly structured programs. It minimises the infiltration of bugs into a program by drawing attention to any syntax errors as lines are entered, redisplaying the offending line for correction. Also, before a program is run, it will check the structure to ensure that the formation of procedures, loops and functions is correct.

THE PACKAGE

Acornsoft COMAL is supplied on a 16K ROM for the BBC Microcomputer. The package comes complete with a comprehensive user guide of 440 pages which explains programming in COMAL from its fundamental principles to its most complex potential.

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COMAL

A structured language in ROM for the BBC Microcomputer Model B

* COMAL for the Acorn Electron is currently in preparation.