

# COMPUTER CONNECTION

Monthly Newsletter of the  
Rockland PC Users Group

Volume 18 Number 3  
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## COLOR PRINTING WITH A DIFFERENCE

Home and small office color printing has taken a giant step forward in the last couple of years. It's now possible to get quality resolutions of up to 1440 dpi in the under \$500 range.

Scanner and digital camera prices have also fallen sharply; as a result, color has arrived on the home and small office desktop in a big way.

Software that produces color output has also plummeted in price while increasing in usability. We can choose from a half dozen clever applications that make it possible for amateurs to turn out slick greeting cards, banners and posters. For the slightly more adventurous there are lots of applications that can perform miracles of retouching and manipulation of digitized photographs. Of course, unless we are designing for the Web where colors are limited and resolution is low, it's absolutely essential to have a reliable color printer.

All color printers are not created equal. The major players, Hewlett-Packard, Epson, Canon, Okidata and Lexmark, all have their devotees. But there's a new kid on the block, Alps Electric, RPCUG's March presenter. Alps will be demonstrating its Micro Dry ink technology which, Alps claims,

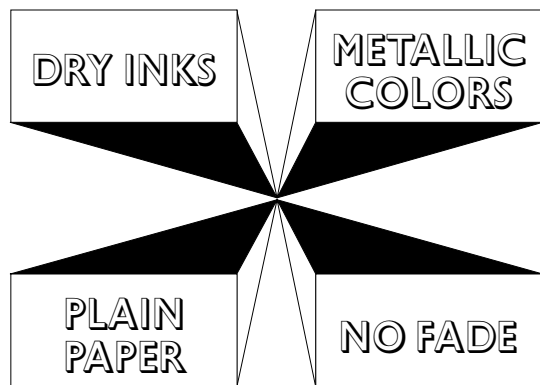
produces brighter and clearer colors and spectacular photo-realistic images. The secret is Alps' smear-proof, waterproof inks, which go on dry and won't fade with age or exposure to

sunlight. With many inkjet printers, faces, eyes and other fine details tend to disappear. Also, if documents contain saturated colors at high resolution we end up with wet output unless we purchase expensive glossy paper to minimize what the professionals refer to as "dot gain."

Alps will show us how gorgeously its Micro Dry inks print on inexpensive laser paper. We'll also see output produced with Alps' metallic inks, which add sparkle to party in-

vitations, greeting cards, and business cards.

There's a chance that Alps will raffle one of its new printers. If they do, some lucky member will walk away with a valuable prize. It's just one more reason to be with your computing friends at the meeting on March 10. ■



### MEETING SCHEDULE

*Rockland Conservatory of Music 7:30 P.M.*

**Tuesday, March 10 – Alps Color Printing**

**Tuesday, April 14 – TBA**

**Tuesday, May 13 – TBA**

(All are welcome)

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Stan Smith



## Installation Of New Or Upgraded Applications

In today's times we all are adding new applications to our systems and upgrading existing applications to get the newest features contained in new product releases.

I suggest the following to make your computing life easier: 1) Always read (and follow) the installation instructions contained in the vendor-supplied documentation; 2) Always look for README files on the application's diskettes and/or CD-ROMs; 3) Always visit the vendor's Web site to look for updated installation information, Q&As, drivers, patches, etc., and then use the found information; 4) Uninstall a previous version if your upgrade version doesn't require it to be on your hard drive; and 5) always insure that no other applications are running when you begin the new installation.

Although there are more issues involved in successful application installations on today's PCs, following the above five steps will minimize potential installation problems and insure a better successful installation ratio.

## Year 2000 (Y2K) Problems

I have mentioned in past columns the upcoming computer/computing prob-

lems associated with the change of the century from 19xx to 20xx.

Briefly, many—if not most—computer systems that were implemented over the last forty years have used a two-digit date field in their processing and databases. That is, "1987" has been internally represented as "87" and "1999" has been shortened to "99." This has been done to conserve space in data storage: saving 5,000,000 date fields in a database as two digits rather than four digits saves 10,000,000 bytes of data storage space. It is important to remember that the availability of inexpensive, high-capacity data storage has been a very recent phenomenon—twenty-five years ago mainframe and minicomputer disk drives cost as much as \$100,000 for just 150MB of data storage space. So there was a strong financial incentive to keep data file sizes as small as possible.

Now, when the year turns to 2000, these computer systems with a two-digit stored year field will assume that the date in the file record is 1900, not 2000. Compounding the issue, these same applications usually have data validation routines that make "reasonability" assumptions about the data they store and process. These reasonableness checks will not allow data inconsistencies, e.g., with a date of birth of January 3, 1944, a date of death of June 23, 1900 wouldn't be allowed.

Unfortunately, this practice of abbreviating the year to two digits became widespread, even after data storage costs plummeted to today's basement levels. There are still many applications that were crafted in the past still running—in government (national, state, and local), businesses (giant, large, medium, and small), and personal computers.

So what happens if things are not fixed? Here are a few examples of what is already happening: 1) Retail point-of-sale termi-

nals (like credit card authorization devices) will automatically reject as expired any credit card that expires after December 31, 1999; 2) leases that extend into the 2000s haven't been processed properly; 3) purchase orders that have a timed schedule of deliverables that stretches into the 2000s won't work; 4) a 104-year-old woman was invited to register for kindergarten since the system thought that she was only five years old; 5) process control computers (that control automated factories and processes) have shut down causing over \$750,000 in repair bills and lost production of goods; and 6) governmental systems that process criminal records, driver's licenses, vehicle registrations, etc., wouldn't schedule court dates or issue licenses that had a date beyond December 31, 1999. These examples are just the tip of the iceberg of Y2K problems we will encounter and have to deal/live with. This problem will become a serious issue and will affect all of us in many ways—as computer users and as consumers and citizens. Don't overlook the issue and dismiss it as not affecting you.

I will be preparing a feature article for a future issue of **ComputerConnection** covering these issues in more depth. If any RPCUG member has encountered the effects of this problem please contact me ([stan.smith@ibm.net](mailto:stan.smith@ibm.net)) with the details of your experiences.

## Meeting Notes

At February's meeting, fellow RPCUG member Mel Zeiger covered the always-timely topics of computer backup and disaster recovery. It was a nice break from having vendor representatives including a (sometimes) hard sell in their presentations of their products. Mel presented a 99% "topic only" presentation and barely mentioned Exabyte, the name of the com-

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# THE EDITOR'S DESK

by Sy Ribakove

## Executive Help Wanted

In his message last month, Stan Smith announced that he would not serve as president after his term expires in June. This leaves a sizeable vacancy for our group to fill. Clearly, no one can take Stan's place or take on as many responsibilities as he has as president. But the fact is, no one has to. We would be mistaken to seek a candidate for president by looking for someone to do the job exactly the way Stan has done it.

Here's what the Rockland PC Users Group Constitution and Bylaws say about the president's specific responsibilities: The president must schedule and preside over meetings, approve meeting programs, appoint committee chairpersons; see that the other officers and committee chairpersons perform their duties, be a member *ex officio* of all committees, and co-sign contracts and other obligations of the group.

## It's a short list.

The bylaws-mandated duties can be accomplished by any RPCUG member who has been successful as a manager. There are two meetings a month—the general meeting on the second Tuesday and the executive board meeting on the fourth

Tuesday. Ideas for programs are discussed at board meetings. Program arrangements are the responsibility of the program chairperson. What the bylaws don't express is that the president needs to be a creative person who is passionate about the well-being of our group.

## Qualifications

It is important to keep in mind that our next RPCUG president does *not* have to be a computer genius and does *not* have to commit to writing a monthly newsletter column. (However, the newsletter is always happy to receive presidential contributions on a regular or occasional basis.) The president *does* have to be a well-organized person, persuasive and skilled at delegating tasks. He or she must make sure that those who take on specific tasks complete their assignments in a timely fashion. Our next president needs to feel comfortable speaking in front of the group and in dealing as an equal with other community leaders. Anyone who comes forward to accept this responsibility will surely wish to put a personal stamp on the office in addition to meeting the mandated responsibilities.

I am certain that there are appropriate candidates among our members. For ex-



ample, many of our seniors possess the requisite management skills.

## Nominating Committee

A nominating committee will begin its search in March. (Committee members will be announced at the March meeting.) Members who wish to increase their involvement in our group's activities and shape its future direction, or who know of others who might be competent to fill top management positions within our group are invited to contact the nominating committee soon after the March meeting. A marvelous opportunity to be a positive and effective force in our group and in the community awaits. ■

### OFFICERS

President	Stan Smith	<a href="mailto:stan.smith@ibm.net">stan.smith@ibm.net</a>
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Treasurer	Paul Shapiro	<a href="mailto:pshap123@aol.com">pshap123@aol.com</a>
At-Large	Jack McDermott	<a href="mailto:ackmac001@aol.com">ackmac001@aol.com</a>

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Webmaster	Steve Weinberg	<a href="mailto:rpcug@acd-pc.com">rpcug@acd-pc.com</a>

The Rockland PC Users Group, a tax-exempt educational organization, meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday. Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. The Rockland PC Users Group supports the computing interests of the community as well as the interests of its own members. The latest information about meeting programs and dates is available on the Internet at <http://www.rpcug.org>.

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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# OFFICE 97 PROFESSIONAL EDITION

by H. Stanley Smith

Office 97 is Microsoft's latest incarnation of its flagship business productivity suite. It is no longer a simple matter to list the individual modules that are contained in the Office package, however. There are a number of different versions: Office 97 Standard Edition, **Office 97 Professional Edition**, Office 97 Small Business Edition, Office 97 Developer's Edition, and Office 97 VAR Edition—each containing a slightly different assortment of modules and capabilities. And then there are academic variations, other specially-packaged versions, as well as various international and language versions of each of the above basic bundlings. Because Microsoft produces so many different Office products, you need to be very careful when purchasing this suite to insure that you obtain what is expected and needed in terms of capabilities and functions. This caution is even more important when purchasing by mail order as it is not possible to read the packaging to see what is included. Also, be very careful when purchasing a new computer that is bundled with Office 97 because the sales person may not be specific as to what version of Office is being included. This can be a case where Office 97: The Expectation is not the same as Office 97: The Delivered and Received.

**Office 97 Professional Edition** contains full versions of Microsoft Word 97 (a high-end word processing application), Microsoft Excel 97 (a high-end spreadsheet application), Microsoft PowerPoint 97 (a high-end presentation graphics application), Microsoft Access 97 (a high-end database application), Microsoft Outlook 97 (a personal information manager providing e-mail management, calendar and scheduling capabilities, contact and telephone list management, to-do list management, general notations, and journaling), and Microsoft Bookshelf 97 Basics (basic reference materials, i.e., the American Heritage Dictionary, the Original Roget's Thesaurus, and the Columbia Dictionary of Quotations). An impressive set of professional office productivity capabilities, indeed.

In fact, this suite of applications is so vast that a full installation requires over 200MB of disk space. It runs only on Windows 95 (and perhaps 95's successors) and Windows NT (with certain service packs installed).

One needs, in my opinion, about 32MB of memory and a Pentium-based processor for optimal performance. And of course, as is true for almost all currently-produced applications, it is only available on a CD-ROM. The Professional Edition can usually be obtained for about \$500, or for \$265 as a competitive upgrade.

Installation was straightforward and allowed a great deal of customization—I always select the Custom Installation option

when installing software—which modules and features I want installed, and where the files for each module are to be installed.

It is important to note that the current release is called SR-1 (Service Release-1). If your CD-ROM contains a bold SR-1 designation on the right side of the CD label, you are looking at the latest version. If your CD is not marked with the SR-1 code, Microsoft has created a very large (7+MB) upgrade to the original release. This huge download will update all modules to the current release level. In addition to many bug fixes, this upgrade adds compatibility with earlier versions of Word. The SR-1 Service Pack is available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/office/office/enhancements/sr1off97.asp>.

The integration and consistency among Office's applications is superb. These applications all look alike, operate alike, and freely and expertly exchange information, files, and documents among themselves. My spreadsheet needs are modest, and Excel 97 certainly contains more power than I need in this category. All of my older-version Excel worksheets were loaded (and converted to Excel 97 format) without error or intervention. They all continued to produce the same results, so my first uses of Excel 97 were as expected and uneventful. Since I am not—by any stretch of anyone's imagination—a spreadsheet power user, I briefly examined the extensive capabilities contained in this product. I then borrowed a large, complex futures-planning worksheet from an associate. It contained many complex macros and formulas. It was also a Lotus 1-2-3 worksheet. Excel 97 happily digested the foreign-based worksheet and faultlessly produced the same results. Even though Excel 97 contains extensive native print formatting capabilities, I then imported the (now converted) super worksheet into Word 97.

Word 97 easily produced an impressive management presentation of the worksheet data. (At least I thought it was a stirring, management-level presentation!) It handled tables, fonts, print enhancements, and presentation graphics with ease. Working in Word was the same as Excel. They seemed to be the same application with only somewhat differing capabilities. They also had many overlapping capabilities, as well. Satisfied that the data looked like I wanted it to look, I turned next to PowerPoint.

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ExecNet, Westchester's outstanding Internet Service Provider, offers a 25% discount to RPCUG members. To obtain the discount during the online subscription procedure, use the RPCUG member number found on the mailing label on the bottom of the last page. ExecNet's access number for new accounts is (914) 667-4567

# VIRUS HOAXES

## APCUG Newsgroup Posting

There are several virus alert hoaxes currently circulating on the Internet. These include reports on the Good Times, Deeyenda, Irina, PKZ300, and Ghost “viruses”.

The following is a *humorous parody* of the kinds of warnings that accompany bogus virus alerts.



“If you see a message with ‘Badtimes’ as the subject line, delete it immediately without reading it. This is the most dangerous virus yet.

“It will rewrite your hard drive. Not only that, it will scramble any disks that are even close to your computer (20’ range at 72° Fahrenheit). It will recalibrate your refrigerator’s coolness setting so all your ice cream melts and milk curdles. It will demagnetize the strips on all your credit cards, reprogram your ATM access code, screw up the tracking on your VCR and use subspace field harmonics to put fingerprints on any CDs you play.

“It will give your ex-boy or girlfriend your new phone number. It will program your phone autodial to call only your mother’s number. It will mix antifreeze into your fish tank. It will drink all your beer and leave dirty socks on the coffee table when there’s company coming over. It will hide your car keys when you are late for work.

“‘Badtimes’ will make you fall in love with someone who is exactly like your ex. It will give you nightmares. It will replace your shampoo with depilatory and your depilatory with Rogaine.

“It will seduce your grandmother. It does not matter if she is dead, such is the power of ‘Badtimes,’ which can reach out beyond the grave to sully those things we hold most dear.

“It will rewrite your backup files, changing all your active verbs to passive and incorporating undetectable misspellings which grossly change the meaning of key sentences.

“‘Badtimes’ will give your oak trees Dutch Elm disease. It will leave the toilet seat up and set a plugged-in hairdryer dangerously close to a full bathtub. It will remove the Do Not Remove tags from your mattresses and pillows, and refill your skim milk carton with whipping cream. It is insidious and subtle.

“These are just a few signs. Be very afraid. PLEASE FORWARD THIS MESSAGE TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW!!!”



The authentic look of the warning bulletins that accompany these phony virus alerts can fool even experienced computer users and support professionals. The hoaxes attempt to overload e-mail systems and create panic. Please don’t circulate them. If you have access to a web browser and would like more real information on these hoaxes, you can find it at the Department of Energy’s CIAC web site. Look for the information at <http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/bulletins/h-05.shtml>. ■

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## Office 97

(continued from page 4)

I have not been a serious user of presentation graphics programs. But PowerPoint didn’t let me down. It imported the Word document with aplomb and produced terrific-looking computer-based presentation slides. PowerPoint had the same look and feel as Word and Excel. Without being a presentation graphics designer, I had a good-looking exhibit, with clearly stated ideas, to present to management for approval.

One included component made the above activities simple and easy: the Office Assistant. At first, I was turned off by the presence of this animated paper clip that kept showing up in all modules of **Office 97**. Since I was turned off, I turned it off—at first. But as I proceeded with my testing tasks, I turned it on again for guidance and assistance. It really did make using the functions of each application self-learning and made consulting the supplied 700-page manual and other documentation unnecessary. It provided—somewhat too “cutesy” for me—interactive guidance on desired tasks. In my experience, it was usually correct in its assumptions of what I wanted to accomplish.

(After installing any version of **Office 97**, be sure to visit <http://www.microsoft.com/office/info/easy>. This is a Microsoft support site dedicated to **Office 97** Users. It contains add-ins, how-to articles, a search feature to allow online reference and help searches, extended help with hyperlinks for all Office applications, an update news service, and some additional “cute” Office Assistants.)

A very quick, cursory look at Outlook, Access, and Bookshelf established the need for me to look at these products in more depth soon.

In short, **Office 97 Professional Edition**—with Service Release-1 installed—has become a valuable ingredient of my computing environment. I will happily continue to dedicate the extensive required amount of disk space to it. ■

# SPINRITE 4.01

by H. Stanley Smith

**SpinRite version 4.01** by Gibson Research Corporation is a hard disk maintenance utility. Its major claim to fame is its ability to recover “unreadable” data from hard or floppy disks. It also allows the periodic non-destructive refreshing of a hard disk’s low-level formatting without the necessity to perform a complete backup and restore.

All disk media (including hard disks and floppy diskettes) have identifying information prerecorded on them before they leave the manufacturing facility. This is called low-level formatting. It includes “address” information for each area where data will eventually be stored, so that the disk controller, operating system or program will be able to find the data. This address would include the cylinder location (at which point across the radius of the disk platter the data is located), the head identifier (under which of the read/write heads the data is stored), and the block identification (which point on the track) for each data block.

The thinking behind the need for a utility like **SpinRite** is that metal parts expand and contract, as a result of the high heat inside a heavily-used computer. Therefore, the original manufacturing tolerances can change enough so that the data areas (tracks) of a disk will minutely migrate over time from where they were when your disk left the factory. **SpinRite 4** counteracts these changes by reading your data and then performing a low-level format that reestablishes the data areas (tracks) on which they are actually located at the time a program is run rather than where they were when the disk left the factory. It then rewrites your data back to the newly formatted tracks.

There is not universal agreement within the personal computer industry as to whether this type of utility is needed at all and whether the above observations concerning the effects of time and heat are correct. With so much controversy about the basic nature of the program, one has to make a personal decision as to whether to use it or not. I use it. I believe in it. I accept the author’s claims regarding what happens to a fixed disk as it ages and is used heavily. I have utilized **SpinRite** from version 1.x to the current version on my own computer systems and on some of my client’s systems. So, for me it has proved to be worthwhile. However, I caution each user to read the provided documentation and heed the warnings before using **SpinRite** on your own computer system.

OK, what does this program do that has caused so much industry controversy? Well, in a nutshell, it rigorously tests your hard disks, performs a nondestructive low-level reformat, and puts stress on the disk controller and drives. If it encounters bad disk areas it attempts to relocate data to another area of the disk and marks the bad area as unusable so no further data can be

stored there. **SpinRite** also produces performance and diagnostic reports. And it can also return previously marked bad disk areas to active use if its own testing indicates that they will continue to perform according to factory specifications.

**SpinRite** can only work its magic on disk drives that are directly recognized by the operating system (Windows 95, DOS, OS/2, etc.) without the need for special device drivers. It will handle DOS (or Windows 3.x, Windows 95, or OS/2) FAT partitions up to 4.3GB in size. It will not work on drives such as Jaz, ZIP, Bernoulli drives or some other add-on disk drives that require a device driver. In the current version, FAT32, HPFS, and NTFS partitions are not supported.

The installation of the program is straightforward: just copy the files onto your hard disk. The program is not copy protected, but the license is limited to just a single machine, so one cannot legally buy a single copy and use it on several machines.

Before using **SpinRite** on a new system for the first time, the user is cautioned to do a full data backup. This is wise advice.

The program can be run directly from the Windows 95 environment. If one is using DOS, OS/2, etc., a “clean system boot” should be initiated before running **SpinRite**; this is most easily accomplished by tapping the F5 key when the monitor displays the message that the operating system is starting. This will prevent any TSRs (memory resident programs) and unneeded device drivers (for scanners, etc.) from being loaded in CONFIG.SYS or AUTOEXEC.BAT.

**SpinRite’s** user interface is very simple. The program has a configuration capability so that the functions that it performs can be controlled by the user. This is where one can specify not to restore previously marked bad sectors to use if they now pass all tests. The user can also specify the testing depth (and therefore the amount of time that it will take to complete).

The initial **SpinRite** examination of your system takes approximately five minutes. The user can watch the tests progress. All tests (even those which take a long time) contain performance monitors on the display so that one will not think that the program is malfunctioning or doing nothing.

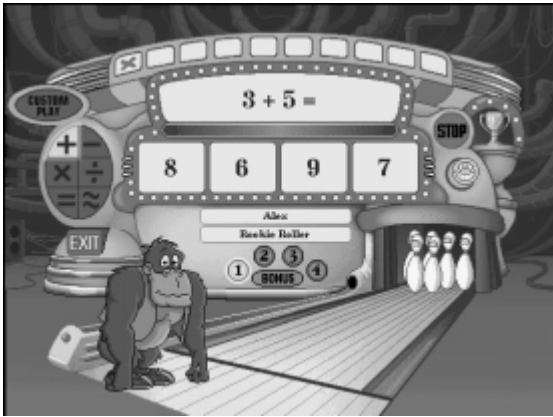
Once the initial compatibility testing has been completed, the user is told whether **SpinRite** can perform all requested functions or whether the tested hardware does not support some of the functions. (Some types of disk drives and controllers will prevent **SpinRite** from performing all of its functions.)

After compatibility has been checked, the main operations begin. At this point, the system can be left unattended with just periodic progress checks. (It is recommended to be run over-

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# MATH WORKSHOP DELUXE

by Stan Tishler



## SpinRite *(continued from page 6)*

night.) There are many different screens that can be toggled to view the testing as it progresses. One screen shows the program's progress with a graphic representation of your disk drive, a second shows some summary information and a scrollable operations and technical log, and a third shows a reformat summary. A Time to Completion value is also displayed.

When **SpinRite** finds an unreadable area of the disk, it begins an exhaustive dynamic error correction operational mode. It uses sophisticated algorithms and hardware control techniques to attempt to read (or reconstruct) the errant data. In my experience, it is highly successful in data recovery, but one cannot expect that all data anomalies will be resolved.

The testing can be interrupted and restarted later, so that the analysis and testing can be run overnight. If it hasn't yet finished in the morning, you can suspend the operation to do productive work until the next night.

Version 4.01 uses the same interface as its predecessor. Unfortunately, Gibson Research has elected to enclose a copy of the earlier manual along with an abbreviated four-page operations and errata booklet explaining the version changes. I find that an objectionable decision. Despite this fault, however, I find this program very professional and well executed. The displays are well-designed; the manual is concise, informative, and well-organized; the program performs without incident and is easy to use. I recommend it as a prophylactic and restorative tool.

The retail price is only \$89 (the street price is even lower); an upgrade may be purchased for \$39. **SpinRite** is a worthwhile investment and a bargain to protect your hard disk data. ■

**Math Workshop** is an edutainment (*education+entertainment*) program from Broderbund for children ages six to twelve. I asked to have it installed on my F drive and was informed that, in addition to the 3.5MB that was going to be installed there, 500K was going to be placed on drive C. This was in addition to having to keep the CD in its drive during play. My last cavil before discussing the program is that it messes up my Windows 95 desktop when I exit—not terminally, but I do need to rearrange things after I close **Math Workshop**.

The graphics are excellent and the speaking voices are very clear. They are natural rather than cartoon-ish, a major plus. I have found that almost none of the children's programs can be used by a total computer novice; this one is no exception. The verbal instructions do not always include all options. For youngsters this could be a problem. My seven-year-old grandson is accustomed to these peculiarities and works around them. But adults must be prepared to spend some time of their own in guiding youngsters in the use of the program. The supplied booklet includes a very helpful parents guide.

**Math Workshop** teaches logic (the game of Nim), fractions, decimals, percentages and geometric relationships (via a jig saw puzzle). The basic arithmetic functions—addition, subtraction, multiplication and division—are also covered. The activities are well designed and there are eight distinct areas to go to, each with a different theme. One has a jigsaw puzzle, another shoots rockets in a game of Nim, while another brings you to a bowling alley for arithmetic instruction; you are rewarded with bowling pins for correct answers; after ten pins are down a gorilla throws a strike. In each area there is some fun activity in addition to the learning process. Math Workshop kept my grandson occupied for a few hours and he came back to it again. This is important for children's programs since once you complete some of them, there is no more challenge or incentive to return.

The program is priced at \$29.95 and comes on a CD-ROM. It requires 4MB of disk space and will work with Windows 3.x as well as 95. It is well worth the money! ■

## President *(continued from page 2)*

pany he represents. Let me add, therefore, my hearty endorsement of Exabyte's tape backup products. I have used their products for tape backup for over eight years, and they have proven reliable and dependable. Thanks, Mel, for educating us.

March will bring a new vendor to RPCUG, Alps Electric. They  
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# ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR 7

by Sy Ribakove

Adobe is the dominant force in the graphics world—some call it the Microsoft of computer art. The company's photo manipulation, drawing, and page layout programs were originally designed for the Macintosh computer but now dominate both the Mac and Windows platforms. Seasoned professional artists still cling for all they are worth to their beloved Macs, but more and more young graphic artists and designers are now working at Windows computers, and learning to develop their graphic skills using Windows tools. Adobe, recognizing a distinct trend, has recently produced Photoshop, PageMaker and **Illustrator** releases for the PC that are just as powerful as their Macintosh counterparts.

Last month it was easy for me to rave about Micrografx Windows Draw, a suite of four graphics programs that can be put on a home computer running Windows 95 for under \$30. This month, my reviewer's task is more complicated because, for the nonprofessional graphics

user, the value of this almost \$400 program is not so easy to demonstrate. Those who are just getting started with graphics need to know up front that it will be a cold day in hell before they can produce a greeting card, banner or poster with this software. **Adobe Illustrator 7** does not easily bestow its functionality on the uninitiated or the unmotivated.

**Illustrator** is immense. Its toolbox contains fifty tools, thirty of them concealed in alternative pop-up arrays. There are ten configurable palettes and 235 mouse and keyboard shortcuts: eighty for menu commands, eleven for hiding or displaying palettes, forty-three for choosing tools, six for the Toolbox controls, forty-one for creating and formatting type, twenty-five for dealing with colors, ten for transforming objects, nineteen for working with layers, fourteen for entering data into graphs, and eleven that don't quite fit into any other category.

The only ray of light in all this complexity is that **Illustrator 7** looks a lot like

Photoshop and a little like PageMaker, so that anyone who has been working with Photoshop 4 or PageMaker 6.5 doesn't have to learn an entirely new language or interface. Menus and palettes are so much alike that it's sometimes difficult, on a first look, to tell which of the Adobe applications you are in.

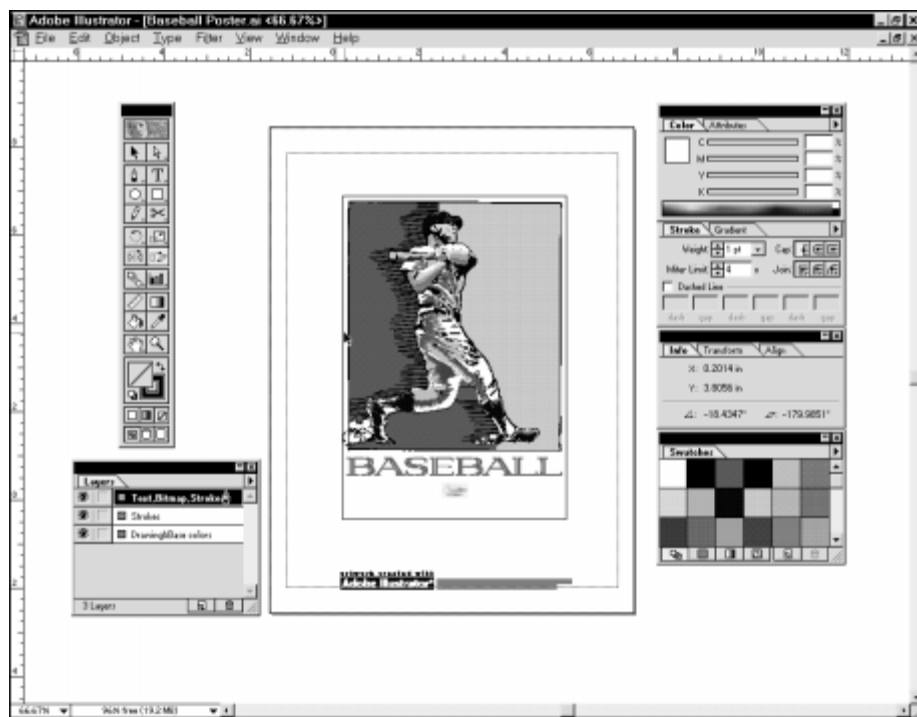
To work effectively in **Illustrator**, you've got to have two things: artistic ability and a drawing tablet. Anyone who's ever tried to produce anything beyond geometric shapes in a computer drawing program knows that it is next to impossible to draw freehand with a mouse. Programs like Micrografx Windows Draw and Broderbund's PrintShop let the artistically-challenged pilfer (legally) from the gifted designers who provide those programs' professionally-designed templates and CDs full of clip art. In **Adobe Illustrator**, we're basically on our own.

**Illustrator's** glossy reference manual helps somewhat, and there's even more help on a second CD, which contains superior tutorials that take a new user through the basics of creating lines and shapes, and manipulating the Bezier curves created with the pen and paintbrush tools. There's also a tantalizing glimpse of some of the wonderful things **Illustrator 7** can do with type. Anyone wishing to design a corporate logo won't find a better set of tools.

On the second CD there's also a multimedia extravaganza that demonstrates the **Illustrator** interface and the drawing and selecting tools without which very little can be accomplished using the program. We are also shown the importance of layers, which make it possible to manipulate portions of the artwork without affecting other portions.

**Illustrator 7** for the PC has several enhancements not available in the previous

*(continued on page 9)*





# ORNAMATICA

by Stan Tishler

This \$18 program from JASC Inc. creates ornamental borders from your own graphics as well as from the ones supplied. Installation into Windows 3.x or Win95 was standard and, as most programs do, it tried to install to Drive C. I wanted it on my E: drive and the installation program allowed me to place it there. However, when I tried to open the newly-installed program from the Windows 95 Start menu it could not find where it had placed itself. Not a big deal, but certainly an annoyance and something that should not happen.

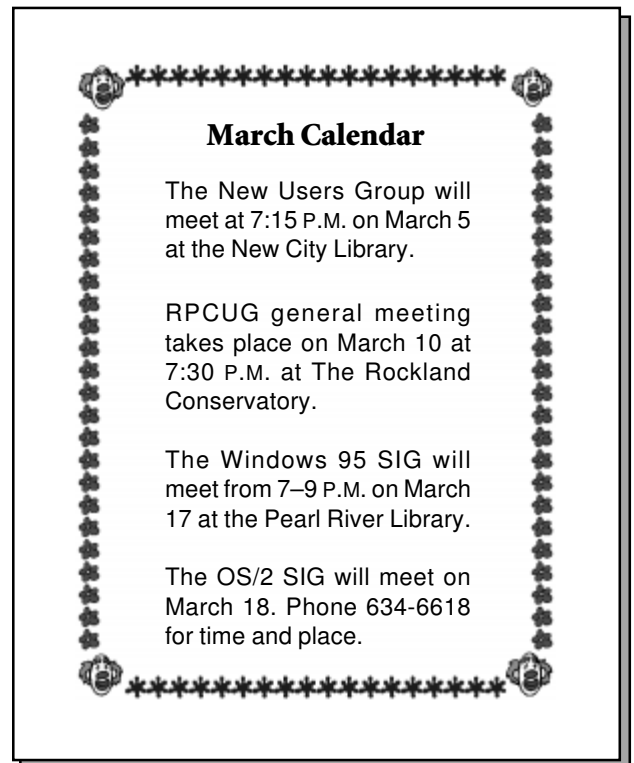
The **OrnomaticA** idea is a good one. If you use the Cardshop-PrintShop-Printhouse kind of application it's nice to be able to design a border that fits your specific needs or reflects your personality. While you can do this with **OrnomaticA**, it's not as easy as it should be. The program will only import and export WMF (Windows Metafile) and CDR (CorelDRAW) files. This means that you need to know which clip art or design you want to use before you begin so that you can convert it to one of these types. You'll also need to know what the program you'll be using requires. Of course, you can always put the graphic on the clipboard and handle it from there (use the Copy option to load it on the clipboard and then in the destination program use the Paste option). Note that **OrnomaticA** would not read CDR files created by Corel Draw 7 (neither would another JASC program, Paint Shop Pro).

The troubles with loading external graphics should not deter you from using this unique and useful program. Making a border is simplicity itself and hundreds of graphic symbols are provided with the program to choose from. Within minutes of installation I was able to design borders that were at least as good as those provided with the print-type programs. Most of these programs accept WMF files so that importing them should not be a major problem. I tried it with Corel Printhouse, Cardshop and Printmaster, WordPerfect, and Word; all accepted WMF files and the **OrnomaticA** borders. Older versions of these programs might not. I think that support for BMP files would have made importing a more universal procedure.

Borders are made up of a series of images that you can size to fit your needs. The graphic components of the border are adjustable in size and can be varied to emphasize specific areas such as corners. All it takes is clicking on the specific area to be sized and dragging it to the size you want. Importing a graphic from those supplied is as simple as clicking on it and dragging it to the spot on the border you want it placed. Replication is easy: you have only to drag a graphic and decide whether it will be used for one, two or all sides of the border, or only in specific cells.

**OrnomaticA** requires Windows 3.x or 95 and 8MB of disk

space. It's well worth its small price, but note that JASC's dedicated support line is in the UK, so you'll probably want to use the company's less expensive but slower Internet support. ■



## Illustrator 7 *(continued from page 8)*

PC version (would you believe it was 4.1?). Vector artwork can be converted to raster images, thus making it possible to apply Photoshop filters to a native **Illustrator** project. Indeed, the ability to drag and drop graphic elements from one Adobe application to another increases the functionality and flexibility of both applications. Adobe has also provided an RGB color palette for this version of **Illustrator**, which makes it possible to use unconverted **Illustrator** artwork on the Web. This is because computer monitors display color images by combining red, green and blue light. Printing with ink involves four colors: cyan (bluish), magenta (reddish), yellow and black.

The bottom line is that for the serious computer graphics artist, purchasing or upgrading to **Adobe Illustrator 7** is a no-brainer. Occasional graphics users are hereby warned away. ■

# OUR READERS TELL US...

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## Bert Mantell writes:

Bring up PROGRAM.EXE. It's a simple request, not important enough for an order. So...what happened? Nothing. Why not? Because the computer does not know where PROGRAM.EXE is, or even if it exists. Neither do some of the members of RPCUG. Last February 10 they didn't, anyway. Then the mighty of our brotherhood assembled and gave up in despair when some of them were asked, "Where on my hard disk is PROGRAM.EXE?" What is PROGRAM.EXE?

This was not a truth or consequences game. The consequences were too severe. You'd better take your "type CPD files" elsewhere, said the computer. And rubbing it in was the proclamation dialogue box, "Windows cannot find PROGRAM.EXE needed for opening files of type 'URL-Hyper Text Transfer Protocol.'"

With that electronic remark I was charitably offered the three boxes of OK, or Cancel, or Locate. Locate! How? New ways to search and use Find Now were discovered. Nothing worked.

It was such a pleasant surprise for this lubber-like surfer to go direct from the Internet bookmark when wishing to use a file he previously spent at least a half hour finding, or even coming upon it by accident. That was a fine straight arrow time and patience saver. Now it is necessary to go all the way around the mountain and still not be sure the goal will be on the other side when he gets there. Two or three of these episodes will erase some of the pleasure from the hobbies and distress the business user.

"Have you a friend with a computer?" asked one well-wisher. That was an easy question. So, go to your friend and ask that he bring up your missing file upon their machine. He will take it off and copy to a small floppy, from where you will then recopy it onto your machine. Those were the well meaning words of wisdom that also secretly entered my thoughts but were found not entirely reassuring

Another problem solver said to simply reinstall the Windows 95 CD. But said she, it is not certain that the missing file came from there. And if it isn't there? An impractical solution, however, as I have used Windows 95 for years but never had done a reinstallation. The reason? The computer set was purchased from the retailer with the software already installed, but none of it in the flesh, and neither were any manuals supplied. Now I see that as a poor practice for the set buyer, as how could one foresee if PROGRAM.EXE strikes again. Or any of the many lurking brother demons of the electronic mystery.

"Try Windows Explorer...try the Internet Explorer...try." None said no. We are a good bunch of guys even if we do not know everything. ■

THE COMPLETE REFERENCE FRONTPAGE 98 by Martin S. Mathews and Erik B. Paulsen; Osborne McGraw-Hill; 700 pages + CD; \$39.99; ISBN 0-07-882394-3

This vast tome proclaims that (Microsoft's) *FrontPage 98* provides an easy-to-use, full-featured set of tools for creating, delivering and maintaining Web sites. I've seen the software in action. It's true! It's easy and intuitive.

The *FrontPage* software comes with only a slim manual. The Complete Reference starts not only with the ABCs of using the software but, more importantly, opens with basic explanations of the Internet, the World Wide Web and what a Web page is. The book even covers important related concepts, such as monitor resolution and color settings, browser graphics and multimedia files and how they can be created to produce fast, exciting and easily-maintained Web sites.

There is a substantial chapter on HTML, the basic code used to create Web pages, which rightfully states that HTML can be used directly to put the last bit of flourish to your Web page. As an update and supplement to the text, there are references to Web sites that fully cover every nuance of the use of HTML.

A step-by-step tutorial led me through the use of each facet of *FrontPage 98*. (The tutorial in the Microsoft manual was fairly good but lacked the depth of discussion, illustration and explanation found here.) There were even thirty-seven pages of explanations and tutorials on Image Composer, *FrontPage's* image manipulation program.

Material on intranets, security, wizards, templates and even on how to properly install the *FrontPage* software were all welcome additions to a fine text. The book's CD includes all the files discussed in the text and tutorials, as well as freeware and shareware programs which complement the *FrontPage* software.

This thorough exploration of *FrontPage 98* is worth reading before you get started with Web publishing; it seems to include everything I ever wanted to know or could imagine I would ever need to know about *FrontPage* in a friendly, usable form.

Reviewed by RPCUG Webmaster Steve Weinberg

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## President (continued from page 7)

have a new color printing technology that is somewhat similar to inkjet technology but that involves a dry printing process. I am eager to learn more about Alps' printers as I have begun to feel the need to add a high-quality color printer to my computing configuration. Join us and learn!

See you on Tuesday, March 10 at 7:30 P.M. at the Rockland Conservatory of Music, 7 Perlman Drive, Spring Valley, NY. ■

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