

COMPUTER CONNECTION

Monthly Newsletter of the
Rockland PC Users Group

Volume 17 Number 7
July 1997

ADOBE VISITS JULY 8 COME SEE THE MAGIC

Anyone who's ever watched a TV commercial, read a book or magazine, pored over a corporate Annual Report or studied a Victoria's Secret catalogue, has seen Adobe's seemingly-magical technology at work. Most high-end publishing and printing involves Adobe's PostScript language. Most art directors, illustrators and designers are using one or more of Adobe's graphics applications: Adobe PageMaker for layout, Adobe Photoshop for photo enhancement and manipulation, Adobe Illustrator for drawn artwork, Adobe Streamline for tracing, Adobe Acrobat for the platform-independent electronic display and transmission of published material—the list goes on and on. It would not be an overstatement to say that if Adobe's products were to vanish suddenly from the earth, the world of publishing would cease to exist.

An Adobe representative will be on hand at our July 8 meeting to present the latest versions of two cutting-edge applications: Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Photoshop. RPCUG members have read about Photoshop (we reported on the latest version

in the March issue) and the many add-ons that Photoshop's open architecture has spawned (see our coverage of Kai's Power Tools in the May issue). If you haven't saved your back issues, you can

read them or download them in Adobe Acrobat format on the newsletter page of our Web site (<http://www.rpcug.org>). Acrobat's Portable Document Format (PDF) is the way electronic publishing is going. Its possibilities seem to be limited only by the creativity and skill of those who have learned to use it.

Since Adobe wrote the book on graphics, presentations, multimedia and design, we're expecting a super presentation

on July 8. We understand that there will be a raffle of Adobe products as well as a chance to have our questions answered about Adobe's applications and PostScript font technology. Time permitting, we'll also get a look at Adobe PageMill, a nifty Web page authoring tool. ■



FEATURES

President's Message	2
The Editor's Desk	3
Review: System Commander	4
Review: MagicCap	5
Review: Nuts & Bolts	6
Review: Office 97	8
Kids' Software	9
Review: CorelDRAW7	10
How to Join Our Group	12

MEETING SCHEDULE

Rockland Conservatory of Music 7:30 P.M.

Tuesday, July 8 – Adobe

Tuesday, August 12 – Swap Meet

Tuesday, September 9 – Intel's CPUs

(All are welcome)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Stan Smith



Our June election of officers for 1997–1998 produced the following results: Paul Shapiro, Gerry Lee and I were re-elected for another term; Sondra Coulter is the new vice president. Congratulations and best wishes to my fellow officers. Members should feel free to contact any of us with suggestions, questions or concerns. Our aim is to serve RPCUG's membership goals and needs. Communicate with us.

Member-at-Large

Your executive board recently appointed John (Jack) McDermott to fill the member-at-large position. Jack will bring membership concerns or issues to the board. He is your "champion" and your advocate. He will be introduced at the next meeting so that all can identify him. You can reach Jack at jackmac001@aol.com or at 356-6125 in the evening.

Welcome, Jack. We are looking forward to your participation and contributions.

Newsletter Wins—Again!

Each year the (very large) Gotham New York PC Users Group (NYPC—with over 3,500 members) sponsors a regional user group conference called Intergalactic. Five RPCUG representatives attended Intergalactic 10 on June 14.

There were lectures, discussions, break-

out sessions, a vendor panel, and many opportunities to develop worthwhile contacts. All attendees thought that the time they invested was well spent.

The highlight of the event was the announcement of the winners in the Lotus- and Adobe-sponsored international contest for the best user group newsletter, brochure and Web site.

Once again, **ComputerConnection** received multiple awards. This year editor Sy Ribakove and our newsletter were recognized as being among the best in the user group community.

ComputerConnection won an Honorable Mention in the Best Columnist category. It also received Honorable Mention for User Group Coverage.

And, most importantly, **ComputerConnection** placed first, winning the coveted Best Newsletter award in the under 17-page category.

Congratulations to our editor and to all who contribute—columnists, reviewers, proofreaders, letter writers.

Our one disappointment was that our fine RPCUG Web site wasn't included in the judging. We submitted it for competition according to the rules, but because of an administrative error by the NYPC contest coordinators, our Web entry was overlooked. I have visited the winning Web sites; in my opinion RPCUG would have been a winner.

So, to Steve Weinberg, our Webmaster, and all of the members who have participated in the development of our Web site, I apologize. We should have been recognized. But wait until next year's Web site competition!

Secret Guide to Computers

They went like hotcakes! We received and delivered twenty copies of the newest edition of Russ Walters' popular *Secret Guide to Computers* at our June meeting.

We also took orders for twelve more. If you are interested in reserving a copy of this popular title, telephone Gerry Lee, our secretary, at 354-3286. Each copy costs nine dollars. We will not be ordering a large number of copies beyond the pre-paid reserved orders. So don't plan on making your decision at the July meeting or later in the year. Think ahead, these books make excellent holiday gifts for your computing family members, friends and associates.

Our Great Volunteers

This month I want to tell you about volunteers Richie Stark and Steve and Elaine Cohen. Richie Stark has been a member since 1992. Over the last five years he has served as our program chairman and Windows 95 SIG leader (he still leads that group). He frequently speaks up to answer questions and provide guidance to members in our Q&A sessions at meetings. He has also donated valuable hardware and software to our group. And he has been a sought-after participant in numerous member-led general meetings. He is an active SIG attendee and participant. His contributions have greatly aided our group. Thanks, Richie.

Although their current participation is limited, long-time member Steve Cohen and his wife Elaine have generously donated their time and expertise to RPCUG. Steve served as our treasurer for many years, volunteering his knowledge and experience (he's a CPA and a partner in a NYC accounting firm) to successfully file an application to be recognized by the IRS as a not-for-profit educational organization. After the successful IRS filing he completed the State filings to have us declared a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. These activities required large expenditures of time and an abundance of

(continued on page 6)

THE EDITOR'S DESK

I've got odds and ends to clean up—books and a CD that have been waiting while I completed my mini-typesetting guide in the last several issues. The CD-ROM is the 1997 Grolier encyclopedia; the books reflect my ongoing struggle to learn to manipulate photos with computer software.

1997 GROLIER MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA; Grolier Interactive; \$49.95
The last Grolier I looked at was the 1994 edition. There have been changes. The main change, perhaps, is the new version's extensive use of the Internet for keeping articles current. The first time I clicked on the Online tab I was invited to update the Online Index from the Grolier Web site. After I told the program that Netscape was my browser, the rest of the process was automatic. With the new index (a small download) installed, I tested it. Unfortunately, on June 1, the chess link could not yet provide material on the May match between IBM's Big Blue and Grand Master Gary Kasparov. If the Grolier's online capability is to prove truly useful, it needs to be updated more frequently. I checked this link again on June 20. Still no Big Blue. Another gripe: the orchestral excerpts are splendid, but those using MIDI

sound are miserable. Listening to the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata plunked out insensitively on a MIDI keyboard was an experience of pure horror. Shame.

I can see the Grolier encyclopedia as a valuable resource for a high school student. For a grade schooler, the puzzling interface, the lack of sparkle and the advanced material would be a drawback. For the college student, there is not advanced material to sustain a 3.0 grade average.

FUNDAMENTAL PHOTOSHOP, THIRD EDITION by Seth and Adele Droblas Greenberg; Osborne/McGraw-Hill; 856 pages; \$34.99; ISBN 0-07-882277-7
Here's everything about Photoshop in one big volume. It is exhaustive and, in some ways, exhausting. Anyone familiar with past versions of Photoshop will find it an excellent reference. For the Photoshop newcomer, the balance between hands-on tutorials and just describing the program's capabilities definitely tips toward verbiage—lots of it. The book deserves a place on every graphics artist's reference bookshelf, but I found it far less useful than *Inside Photoshop 4* from New Riders which favors Showing over Telling.



KAI'S POWER TOOLS 3 AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE by Nick Clarke; Peachpit Press; 512 pages+CD; \$39.95; ISBN 0-201-68809-3

Kai's Power Tools, a mad genius set of filters for applications that support Adobe's plug-in architecture, was reviewed in the May issue. Kai Kraus has designed an interface for his "tools" that borders on the lunatic. As if there weren't enough ways to diddle with images using Photoshop or its many digital imitators, you can lose yourself, if you've a mind to, in Kai's nutsy world of textures, fractals, spheroids and

(continued on page 5)

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 to all on the RPCUG BBS at 359-6178 and on the Internet at <http://www.rpcug.org>.

OFFICERS

President	Stan Smith
Vice President	Sondra Coulter
Secretary	Gerald F. Lee
Treasurer	Paul Shapiro

Programs	Sondra Coulter
----------	----------------

No portion of **ComputerConnection** may be reproduced without permission. APCUG members may use material if it is credited to the author and **ComputerConnection**. Articles and letters will be published at the discretion of the Editor.

Advertising rates: full page insert \$120. Display ads: half page \$75, quarter page \$45, eighth page \$25, business card \$20. 15% discount for the same ad in three or more consecutive issues. Members receive a 10% per issue discount. There will be a typesetting charge for non-camera-ready ads. Ad deadline is the third Tuesday.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Sy Ribakove

syriba@earth.execnet.com

Review Coordinator Stan Tishler

SYSTEM COMMANDER

by H. Stanley Smith

Not too many people need **System Commander** by V Communications, Inc. (about \$69 street). But if one does need its unique capabilities, many dollars and a lot of time can be saved.

Very simply, **System Commander** lets one install and selectively boot up to as many as one hundred different operating systems—a number clearly greater than the operating system disk storage capacity of contemporary PCs.

My use was far more limited—I wanted to be able to install IBM's PC DOS 7.0 with Windows 3.11, OS/2 Warp, and Windows 95 on the same PC and be able to control and switch seamlessly between them without any undesirable interactions or corruptions. Since I had already begun this process before installing **System Commander**, my system was initially set up using IBM's Boot Manager that is contained in OS/2. That worked, but I had to have two primary disk partitions, one for DOS/WIN and another for Windows 95. That meant that one of my 1GB primary partitions (and the programs and data contained thereon) was unavailable every time I booted. That is, when I booted the DOS/WIN 1GB partition, the Windows 95 partition was not accessible. Similarly, when I booted the 1GB Windows 95 partition, the DOS/WIN partition was not accessible. This was not desirable.

Enter **System Commander**. After a quick installation and a few tweaks, my problems were solved.

But my current setup isn't as I originally envisioned. That is, when I boot Windows 95, I have the availability and use of my DOS/WIN partition and all of its programs and data. That's as I envisioned. After all, Windows 95 can run DOS and Windows 3.x programs. And WIN 95 fully understands the DOS/WIN partition's File Allocation Table (FAT) structure.

But neither DOS nor Windows can run Windows 95 programs. And they don't understand the long file names that Windows 95 insists on. So, to prevent any unwanted problems, I have left the Windows 95 partition inaccessible when I am booting

into DOS/WIN. I can live with that, but **System Commander** allows me to choose. Other methods (including Boot Manager) don't let users determine how their systems will function.

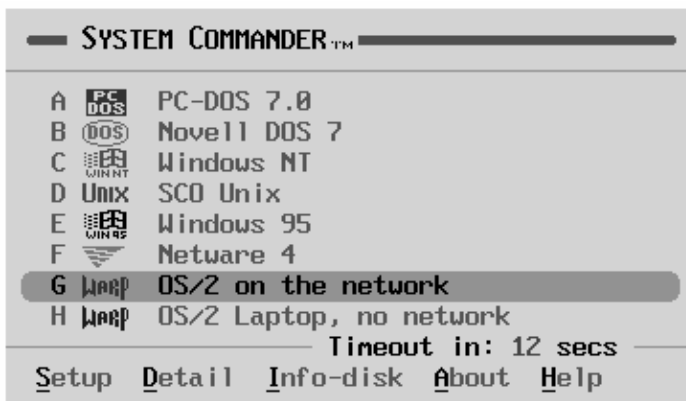
But what of OS/2? Well, since OS/2 can run DOS and Windows 3.x programs and, like DOS/WIN, doesn't understand the long file names of Windows 95 and cannot run Win 95 programs, **System Commander** is configured so OS/2 does not see the Windows 95 partition. But it does see a High Performance File System partition that neither of the other operating systems sees or understands. So every OS is happy, and set up as I want.

System Commander offers many configuration and customization options. I spent over two hours examining each possibility, and changing in small ways the way that my system operates. There are elaborate security measures that can be established customizing the boot options for different users. And the range of operating systems that are recognized and handled is truly amazing—PC DOS; MS-DOS; DR-DOS; OS/2; Windows 95; Windows NT; Pick; NetWare; Japanese versions of DOS, Windows, and Windows 95; Linux; many other versions of Unix; and even different versions of all of the preceding (e.g., DOS versions 3.3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, etc.) One can even have multiple versions of the *same* operating system installed (e.g., one version of OS/2 Warp 4 configured for network, Internet, and mainframe communications, and one version configured as a lean, fast standalone computer; or Windows 95 original distribution and Windows 95 Service Release 2; or one DOS configuration with maximum memory for games and another configured for maximum functionality).

The 176-page Users Manual is well done and full of detailed information about **System Commander**, hard disk partitioning, and the special requirements for various operating systems. There are several cautions in the manual including the suggestion that the user read the entire manual before using the product. I heeded the advice, but then, I really like reading manuals.

The installation went smoothly and took only ten minutes.

I highly recommend this program for anyone who can use its unique features—anyone who is comfortable using the FDISK and FORMAT commands and programs such as PartitionMagic or Partition-It. This is not a program for the neophyte. Even understanding the concepts involved in the disk management problems that **System Commander** solves requires knowledge and experience that not everyone possesses. If you need this program and don't have the requisite knowledge and experience, buy the program and obtain a friend or consultant to assist you in installing and configuring it. It certainly is remaining on my system. I like it and am pleased with the results. ■



MAGIC CAP FOR WINDOWS 95

by Steve Weinberg

Billed as “The amazing way to organize all your communications,” **Magic Cap** software from General Magic Inc. purports to be the answer for those of us who want to simplify and organize our computing lives. In my case, this under \$50 utility let me put lots of my “eggs” into one easy-to-use basket.

My appointment calendar and my address book were easily imported from Lotus Organizer and even took on some new functionality. Each record now had room for multiple addresses, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers and more. Placing a call, sending an e-mail or faxing a document to anyone in my address book from **Magic Cap** was simple. For example, I had one record for each member of the RPCUG executive board. After placing their records into a group, I was able to add a message to an electronic postcard (Telecard), address it to the group and send it. **Magic Cap** then dialed my Internet Service Provider and e-mailed the message to each member of that group—except the one with only a fax number on the record. For this member, **Magic Cap** reformatted the text for fax transmission, dialed the fax number and sent the fax on its way.

It seemed as though I could choose any combination of electronic messaging types and even attach files to messages. Experimenting, I attached a Word document which got faxed as additional pages to some and e-mailed to others as an attached file. At the recipient’s end, the faxed document looked like a second-generation light copy, but the message portion and cover sheet were fine. I suspect that I needed to use a bolder font.

Filing my sent and received messages was easy. I quickly created several file drawers with many named folders in each drawer. There appeared to be some troubling interaction between this and other communication programs, but I resolved the conflict by making sure that only one communication program at a time was running.

The user interface was somewhat different from that found in typical Windows 95 programs, but was fairly easily adjusted to. However, even though Windows 95 knew my Time Zone, **Magic Cap** thought I was located in San Francisco. Even after I changed my **Magic Cap** default location to New York to get the clock corrected, my outgoing messages still were stamped four hours earlier than they had actually been sent.

Magic Cap allowed me to attach animated graphics, personal voice messages, sounds and drawings to the Telecards it sent, but only other users of **Magic Cap** software could receive these colorful attachments. Mail I had received through Microsoft Exchange was displayed well, but Netscape Mail came out with very long lines of text—no word wrap. Another problem: the weekly (eight day) calendar sometimes started on Sunday and



sometimes on Monday. It was quite confusing.

All in all, the software has some nice features but the jury is still out as to whether I will give up using Lotus Organizer.

System requirements: Windows 95, 483/33 or above, CD-ROM, 8MB RAM, 10MB hard disk space, modem, mouse, ISP or AOL account. ■

Editor *(continued from page 3)*

gradients. It is mostly incomprehensible stuff. Nick Clarke’s “guide” is not much help. While the book claims to support both Macintosh and Windows users, there were so many invalid PC instructions right at the beginning that I found the book almost useless. Sorry, I can’t recommend it.

PHOTOSHOP IN FOUR COLORS by Mattias Nyman; Peachpit Press; 78 pages; \$22.95; ISBN 0-201-88424-0

Here’s a slim volume that contains a world of wisdom about producing and understanding color work on a computer. You’ll find no excess verbiage here. Every topic is covered succinctly and illustrated meaningfully. There are, at the most, four pages to a topic (including illustrations) and many topics are well covered in only one or two pages. The book was originally published in Sweden and released here when Photoshop 3 was new. Its age does not detract in the slightest from the book’s value to its target audience—intermediate to advanced users who (in the author’s words) “wish to produce high-quality color output in a desktop publishing environment.” ■

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(continued from page 2)

knowledge in dealing with State and Federal government forms and procedures. Because of Steve's efforts, you can deduct your membership dues as a charitable contribution on your taxes. He still files the Federal and State forms required each year to maintain our not-for-profit status.

Whenever we have voluminous copying needs, Steve gets it done. He and Elaine have also frequently represented RPCUG at local computer fairs. Steve and Elaine graciously provided their home for board meetings for several years. And when Xerox was doing our newsletter printing, Elaine traveled to Yonkers each month to pick up the completed work.

Thanks, Richie and Steve and Elaine, for your participatory spirit.

We have even more volunteers to recognize, so next month I will continue these recognition paragraphs. Will you be the next to be featured?

Deep Blue

A computer has finally beaten a world chess champion. IBM's Deep Blue (a highly customized collection of 32-nodes containing 256 tightly-coupled, high-performance RISC computers) who (fully recognizing the elevation to almost-human status that word "who" implies) can compute from fifty to one hundred *billion* possible chess positions per allowed three-minute move, recently beat champion Garry Kasparov in a six-game match. In addition to its staggering raw computing power, Deep Blue also was able to access an enormous database containing all chess master "open game" scenarios for the last *one hundred years* as well as several *billion* "end game" scenarios.

But HAL 9000 (the human-sounding and reacting computer in the movie *2001*) is not around the corner. Not any time soon. Deep Blue had a whole team of designers and programmers working eight

years to enable it (him? her?) to only slightly exceed human performance in just one discipline. Just one!

Although the lessons learned through the Deep Blue effort will apply to other disciplines, a truly human-interactive computer as seen in many sci-fi movies (e.g., Star Trek's voice-activated computer) may not see the light of day in my lifetime. Or, depending on your age, yours. But it is coming. Will your children or grandchildren be ready? Give them all of the exposure to today's technology you can, and they will assimilate the future computer-automated environments naturally and without maladjustment.

FireWire (1394)/USB/EVC/ (Ultra and Wide) SCSI/SSA

Do these buzz words mean anything to you? They should. They should, that is, if you are considering a new computer. If your new "screaming machine" doesn't contain any (or all) of them, you will not be ready to add the peripherals of the future to your system.

The Universal Serial Bus (USB) will allow one connection (or cable) to support (or attach to) many different devices (of high, medium, and/or low speed). Such devices as keyboard, (multiple!) monitors, mouse and scanner can all be connected to a computer's single USB connector. And USB will even permit many devices to obtain their electric power right through the same cable, eliminating the need for separate AC power cords for each device. Perhaps we may see the elimination of the terrible cable tangle that you find in systems with external peripherals.

FireWire, or 1394, is a similar technology for even faster devices. The Enhanced Video Connector (EVC) is similar, but is limited to supporting video devices. Small Computer Systems Interface (SCSI), Ultra SCSI, and Ultra Wide SCSI devices and

interface cards already exist. And Serial Storage Architecture (SSA) is an even higher performance solution for disk data storage and retrieval. Look for increased use of these emerging high-performance, technologies.

Don't worry if your computer doesn't have these technologies built in. High-performance add-in PCI cards will breath new life into your old faithful friend. Be sure to save an available PCI slot.

Year 2000

Various industry research organizations and pundits have predicted dire circumstance will follow the turn of the century into the year 2000: The U.S. (and other area) electric power grids and power plants will shut down; Social Security (and other governmental) checks will disappear from the scene; banks will no longer be able to process and clear checks, make interest payments, handle loan payments and disbursements, or process credit card transactions. The Gartner Group (a prestigious industry research group) has predicted that these and other calamities will occur unless the "most ambitious and costly technology project in history" is successfully completed. Will all the needed work be done on time? Gartner answers: "When did you last see a huge software project that met its deadline and worked perfectly?"

Gartner predicts the estimated cost of solving these problems at \$6 *billion* with possibly another \$3 *trillion* in follow-on litigation. As you can see, this is a major problem indeed.

So, how will it affect personal computing? Certainly not to the degree that business will be affected. Maybe not at all. Here are some tests you can perform to see how your PC might react to the Year 2000 issue:

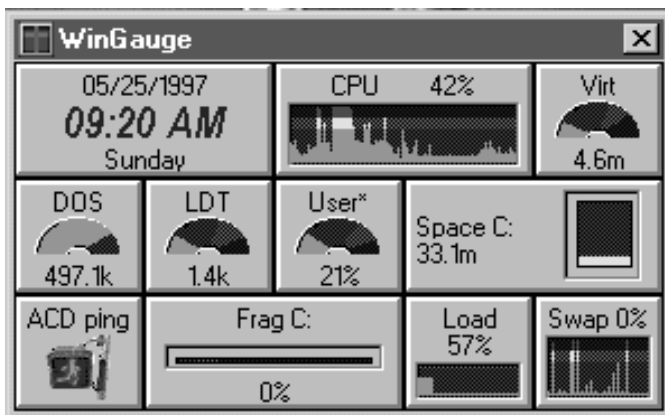
(continued on page 11)

NUTS & BOLTS

by Steve Weinberg

Nuts & Bolts is produced by Helix Software, the makers of Hurricane memory enhancement and performance software. The box states that **Nuts & Bolts** provides, "Everything you need to fix up, clean up, speed up and tune up your system!" It certainly has done a good job cleaning up and tuning my PC. Many features are specifically targeted at Windows 95, but Windows 3.x utilities are also included.

Nuts & Bolts has given me easy control over the mysterious Windows 95 Registry, defragged my hard disk in record time, set Windows system options for booting and Explorer options for the way information is displayed. I now have password protection for individual files, a program to easily manage my zipped files, and Wingauge to monitor my system's performance. Launchpad gives me single mouse click access to programs, and Shredder can permanently erase super-sensitive files. Another utility will rescue unsaved data if I should get the infamous Win-



dows 95 Illegal Instruction dialog box. The software is a control freak's dream come true.

Installation, including the creation of a rescue disk for disaster recovery, was slick and quick. The Disk Tune utility allowed me to place the most frequently accessed and the most frequently modified files nearest the free disk space on my hard disk. By organizing and defragmenting the hard disk at a record pace (faster than Norton Utilities' Speed Disk!) system responsiveness was greatly improved.

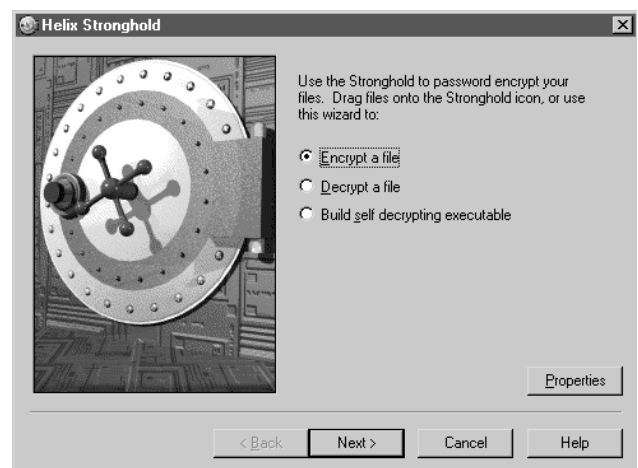
The utility most interesting to me was the Registry Wizard. I do lots of program installations and subsequent removals. Some uninstall programs are fastidious about removing entries made in the Registry. (The Registry controls how Win95 looks, how it runs and how applications run.) I cleaned up lots of orphaned Registry entries left by programs long gone or programs that I

had moved from one location to another. After much cleaning and pruning, I used Registry Tune-up to reorder and remove unused entries, which shrank and optimized Registry operation. Ah, control at last! Well, not quite. Another utility, Registry Pro, which allowed advanced configuration options, crashed consistently, even after I downloaded and applied the latest patch from Helix's Web site.

I used **Nuts & Bolts'** Launchpad to access to all my frequently used programs. I have been using it happily along with Wingauge which lets me watch as hard disk space disappears, fragmentation levels spiral upward and virtual memory is suctioned out of my system.

I tried the Shortcut Wizard to locate and remove some obsolete shortcut files. More control! I wanted even more. I got it with EZSetup, which let me configure Explorer and access the properties of the programs I run at startup. It also gave me, at long last, a way to remove a shareware program that I no longer had installed, but that insisted on showing up in the list of applications I could automatically remove from Windows 95. More control was available with Trashguard, which can restore files deleted from Explorer or DOS and with Discover Pro, which provides hardware diagnostics, analysis and benchmarks.

Using **Nuts & Bolts** was an altogether positive and productive experience, helping me to clean up areas of my system that were sorely in need of attention. Its well-organized printed manual is a rarity these days. Response to my e-mail request for the latest patch came quickly from the Helix Web site. This is a very worthwhile and easy-to-use collection at a very reasonable price (\$44.99). It is designed for a 386SX or higher PC running Windows 3.x or Windows 95 with 4MB RAM, 15MB hard disk space and a CD-ROM drive. ■



FIRST LOOK: OFFICE 97

by Stan Tishler

Every couple of years Microsoft comes out with an upgrade to Office suite and I wonder what features they could possibly add that would induce me to purchase it. **Office97 Pro** does not add many new features but the suite is now easier to use.

Office97 Pro contains five major Windows 95/NT programs: Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, and the newly-added Outlook (the non-Pro version of **Office97** lacks Access). There is also a stripped-down version of Microsoft Bookshelf. The suite is tightly integrated, with shared drawing tools and similar toolbars and menus. Every application is Internet-enabled and suitable for workgroup collaboration. Users can automatically convert documents, spreadsheets and presentations to Web pages. I found Office Assistant, **Office97's** new help system, superior to any Help facility I've used before.

Installation, via CD-ROM, was a standard Windows 95 procedure. It required about 120MB of hard drive space and 16MB of RAM. I opted to remove my previous version, Office95, prior to the new installation. (Even though I lose some of my tweaking and customizing, I've found that starting clean creates fewer problems. Of course, I save my data files first.)

Word Processing

I've been a WordPerfect user since the early DOS days and always considered WordPerfect a cut above Word. That was until Word95. At that point, the programs seemed equally capable. Any clumsiness I still attributed to Word was probably the result of my own inexperience. Both word processors now supply many more tools than any of us will ever use. Writing letters and reports are the most common uses and these simple tasks are handled easily. With the exception of some file compatibility issues (to be discussed later on) you would be hard pressed to tell if you were using Word95 or Word97. Some of the auto-formatting features are interesting. Without blocking you can easily format an entire page. Type a number at the beginning of a line and Word97 will begin numbering subsequent lines. If you have a one-line paragraph, Word97 assumes it's a heading and automatically increases the font size and boldfaces the text. Word count is just a single click away, a helpful feature. All of these features are optional, some are annoying, but all are easily toggled off. Sometimes features seem to toggle on without my asking for them. Although they are easily turned off, I'm learning how to keep them from turning on.

There are many convenience features. For instance, there's no need for a macro to insert a dash: two consecutive hyphens create an em dash. Desktop publishing features are all present, and so newsletters and brochures can be created with automatically

flowing text boxes and columns as well as the ability to flow text around irregularly shaped objects.

Spreadsheet

Excel has always been my spreadsheet of choice. There is very little that any other spreadsheet can do that Excel can't. It does much more than I need or will ever need. This version adds the ability to query Web sites and place the results into cells for further manipulation. This is great for those of us who use the Internet for financial information. When you draw a chart in Excel97 the program outlines the data included in the chart. Page margins can be dragged to wherever you want them and the program resizes spreadsheet rows and columns when you do. (I still haven't been able to figure out Excel97's paste functions but most everything else seems to be easier to use.) The Office Assistant is as powerful here as it is in Word97 and I found I needed it more for some areas, such as Fields. Hyperlinks, new in Excel97, easily connect data in other programs and on the Internet to cells in your spreadsheet. While linking was previously available, it was not as easy to use as it is now. There is no real change in the look and feel of this program but it does seem to be easier to use.

Database

My background in databases started with dBASE, progressed to Paradox and then to Access. The applications increased in power and ease of use as I upgraded. Access, at one time the weakest component of the Microsoft suite, is now a strong and complete database management system. You can run a business with it. A set of Wizards guides you through the setting up of a database and any reports you require. Exchanging information between Excel and Access is especially easy (some views of Access look like spreadsheets) but getting information inserted directly from the Internet into Access cells is not as easy. I did not find much else new in this version.

Personal Information Manager

Outlook is a totally new addition to the suite. It is the only program I had startup problems with: An error message stated that I had not set up my address books. This took some figuring out and my thought at the time was that the Office Assistant or Wizard should have walked me through that procedure. Outlook organizes all the standard PIM things (names, addresses, phone numbers, fax, e-mail, contacts, etc.), It also keeps a journal that records the time spent in other suite areas. I found Outlook a little clumsy; it's my least favorite Office97 application.

(continued on page 9)

COMPUTING FOR KIDS

by Stan Tishler

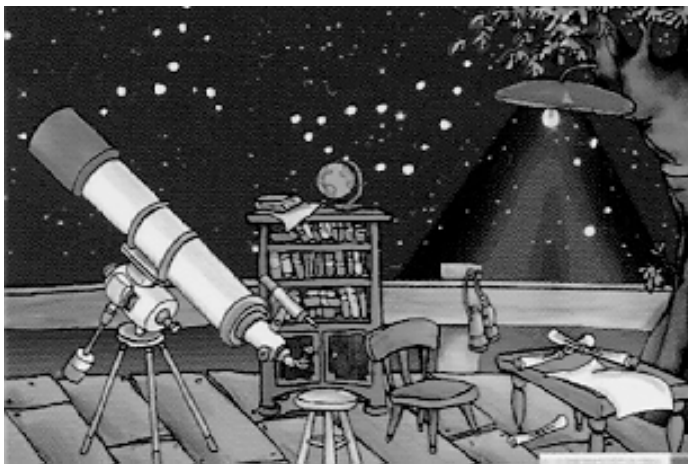
This month we've got two science-type edutainment programs: **Ozzie's Science** from Digital Impact and **Gizmos and Gadgets** from The Learning Company. Both are for Windows 3.x or 95 and can be run from the CD-ROM.

Ozzie's Science, the fourth program in the Ozzie series, is the best yet. Previous releases have been based on geographical areas; this one is science-based and it is very well done. Six sciences are explored: astronomy, physics, botany, zoology, meteorology and chemistry. Each presents a unique interface. For example, when astronomy is chosen, a telescope focused on the stars appears. When one of the stars is clicked, its constellation is announced and a cartoon graphic appears (a Dipper, Crab, or Unicorn.)

Games and a coloring book are provided for each science. There are also hands-on activities using household items (making a telephone with tin cans). **Ozzie's Science** will keep a child involved for hours. It's rated for ages five to ten and is well worth its \$39.95 price.

Gizmos and Gadgets (\$29.95) claims to be appropriate for ages seven to twelve. To use it efficiently, a child needs to be able to read. Younger children might not be up to the required level. Also, the interface is strange, which makes navigating difficult.

Still, the program is interesting and imaginative. You are given a choice of three buildings to enter: Automotive, Aircraft, or Alternative Energy. Once inside you find yourself in the workshop in which you'll build a vehicle. You study a blueprint to see what components would produce the fastest vehicle. Then you go to a warehouse, pick up the necessary parts and return to the workshop. This is not easy to do: it requires the use of both the keyboard and the mouse. The process is not at all intuitive for young hands or my older ones.



While moving through the warehouse you find yourself in rooms that require you to solve scientific puzzles—such things as connecting wires to a battery and light bulb to get the bulb to light. This part of the program is done well.

I found **Gizmos and Gadgets** to be very frustrating for the youngsters and for me; I simply couldn't figure out how to get out of certain rooms. On the plus side, the program's real world approach to solutions is well done. Older children are likely to learn some scientific principles.

I recommend this program for children nine and older. It is so different from the current crop of children's software that it might be worth putting up with its foibles. If you have to help a youngster negotiate the puzzles, you'll find it a good way to spend quality time together.

So—both of these programs cover science but if I were only going to buy one, **Ozzie's Science** would be my choice. ■

Office97 (continued from page 8)

Presentation

Many of PowerPoint's charting and graphing capabilities are available in Excel, but putting everything together as a presentation is PowerPoint's specialty. It is designed to accept data from other parts of the suite as well as the Internet. Again, a Wizard is available for in-context help and especially for creating HTML files. Most of the change here, as in the rest of the suite, is in access to the Internet.

Microsoft's decision to change file formats could be a problem for some users. For example, if you want to save a Word97 document as a Word95 or earlier version, it is basically saved in Rich Text Format, which loses some formatting. Earlier versions of the programs cannot read the new formats, so Microsoft has had to develop utilities (available on the Microsoft Web site) to handle them. However, if you're managing an office environment, I suggest thinking long and hard before allowing a mix of **Office97** and prior versions. My recommendation is to upgrade all users or leave everything alone.

Office97 Professional Edition can be purchased for around \$550, the Standard Edition for \$100 less. As an upgrade, the Pro edition is around \$260 (look for rebates of around \$40); the Standard Version (without Access) is around \$220 (same rebate). If you are happy with your current version of Office there is not enough new here to upgrade. If you're a first-time buyer, definitely choose **Office97**. ■

CORELDRAW 7

by John Iurica

CorelDRAW 7 is the king of the flash and glitz graphics world—a suite of graphics programs that can meet most of our computing needs. The drawing program is what sells the package: it is the single element that makes the suite worth its price. The other programs keep Corel competitive with other graphics vendors.

The suite only runs under Windows95. A complete installation, without clip art, uses around 420MB on your hard drive. A pared-down, reasonable installation will hit 300MB. Limiting the number of fonts from the 1,000 TrueType and Type 1 fonts provided helps. Just install what you are going to use.

The flagship program, **CorelDRAW 7** (DRAW), is a vector-based program. This means that the drawn elements are objects (defined by the internal mathematics of the program) and do not lose resolution as you enlarge them. These objects will utilize the maximum capability of any printer or monitor on your system.

Plenty in the Box

DRAW's tools have always been extremely easy to use, but in this version there is a tutor that guides you through the use of each tool while you are using it. This means that I do not have to bring out the manual as often as I used to. (There are actually two well-written manuals plus a beautiful catalogue of the clip art and fonts) Three CDs in the box contain over 32,000 royalty-free clip art images and symbols.

The most beautiful digital art work that I have ever seen has been produced by DRAW. Every year Corel sponsors a contest for its users. Those who enter have to agree to have their work placed in the public domain. At the end of the contest, Corel publishes a stunning coffee table book showing thousands of entries along with CDs containing the best artwork.

The drawings are always very complex but you can break them apart in DRAW and borrow a single object out of someone else's picture. For example, in a picture of a man riding a horse, you might only wish to use the horse. If you enter the contest, you are rewarded with that year's coffee table book along with the CDs. The year that I entered, I also received some key rings, a mouse pad and a free copy of CorelFLOW.

How I Use It

However, creating artwork is not my primary use of DRAW. I actually use it as my publishing program, laying out and producing booklets such as my 1996 "Fisherman's Ephemera." I actually prefer DRAW to Ventura Publisher and PageMaker, both of which I have on my system. For example, I usually publish a 24-page booklet on legal paper (8.5"x14"). Six sheets folded in half yields twenty-four 8.5"x7" pages. As I work on the booklet I see facing pages on the screen (e.g., pages 2-3, 4-5, etc.) However, when it comes time to print, DRAW cleverly creates the signatures—pages 1 and 24 print on one side of the legal sheet, pages 2 and 23 print on the reverse side.

DRAW can flow text from box to box on the same or on different pages. You can even wrap text around pictures or have it conform to a curved line. Probably the best feature is DRAW's ability to snap objects or text to a grid. This makes it easy to position text and artwork accurately. I either import the graphics if they are bitmapped or create them right on the page if they are vector art. Text can also be either imported or created right on the page. (It looks like I am going to do more text importing since there is now an import filter for WordStar for Windows.) If you do not feel competent to set up a booklet, newsletter or pamphlet, you can

let DRAW do it for you. There are more than 450 templates for creating your own flyers and brochures. This is a good place for the beginner to learn layout or just be assisted in producing a quality document.

Not Just Drawing

The second most important component of the suite is PHOTO-PAINT 7. This is a program for manipulating photographs and other bitmapped art. It has all the necessary tools and includes a limited version of Kai's Power Tools.

PHOTO-PAINT 3 was the most incomprehensible program of its kind—totally unusable. The next version was completely revamped and changed. It was just as bad. Corel has finally come up with a version that is both easy to use and loaded with features. It is now easier to use than Adobe Photoshop. For this, I give PHOTO-PAINT the award for being the most improved program of the year.

A Cornucopia of Goodies

CorelDRAW 7 contains too many programs to cover in this review. You get a 3D vector drawing program called DREAM 3D 7. This is an upgrade of Ray Dream Designer 3D which has been licensed by Corel and comes with 250 3D models and 750 floating objects. Also included is Corel-DEPTH, which applies instant 3D effects to text and graphics. In the Corel box, too, are a scanning program, a screen capture program, a script editor, a multimedia manager, a texture creating program, a color management system, a tracing program and (would you believe it?) an OCR module.

Whatever you think about the rest of this stuff, the DRAW module alone is more than worth the entire price. The **CorelDRAW 7** suite is available by mail order for \$440 (\$225 to upgrade any previous version). ■

COMING ATTRACTIONS

OS/2 SIG News

The OS/2 SIG has exciting programs planned for the coming months. This announcement is meant to alert all RPCUG members to our upcoming meeting topics.

On July 16 we will demonstrate two products from Clear & Simple: Performance Plus 4 (a comprehensive performance analyzer and OS/2 tuner) and DiskJockey (a multithreaded file management utility).

At the August 20 OS/2 meeting we will showcase SofTouch Systems' GammaTech Utilities (many of the Norton Utilities capabilities for OS/2), UniMaint, and GammaTech PowerPack (utilities for editing .INI files, system control files, and other OS/2 configuration files).

When the OS/2 SIG meets on September 17 we will be showing Stardock Systems' productivity applications: Object Desktop Professional, Process Commander, and OS/2 Essentials 2.

We will switch to Stardock's recreational offerings when we meet on October 15, where we will show the OS/2 gaming hits Entrepreneur, Links OS/2, and Stellar Frontier.

On November 19 we will complete our look at Stardock Systems' recreational products: Galactic Civilizations II and its two add-ons, Avarice, and Star Emperor. We will also complete Stardock's productivity applications when we demo PlusPak: Themes and PlusPak: PMINews.

We will finish our OS/2 year on December 17 with SofTouch's GammaTech IRC, FileStar/2, GammaTech FileSecure, and GammaTech REXX SuperSet/2 Professional Edition.

As you can see, we have a full set of interesting applications and programs to present. Please join us for intriguing and informative meetings. We meet at the Congers Veterans Memorial Association building, 65 Lake Road East in Congers.

AND KEEP IN MIND

July

- | | |
|----|--|
| 6 | Computer Fair; 10-3; Holiday Inn in Suffern |
| 8 | General Meeting; Adobe; 7:30 P.M.; Rockland Conservatory |
| 10 | Investment SIG; 7-9 P.M.; Fielding Room at Finkelstein Library |
| 15 | Windows 95 SIG; 7-9 P.M.; Pearl River Library |
| 16 | OS/2 SIG; 7:30 P.M.; VMA Building in Congers |
| 24 | Communications SIG; 7:00 P.M.; New City Library |

Meetings begin promptly at 7:30 P.M. Call Stan Smith at 634-6618 for additional information. See you on July 16. ■

President *(continued from page 6)*

First, enter your computer's CMOS/Setup/Configuration program (see your computer's manual if you do not know how). Then set the clock to 11:55 P.M. (23:55 on most computers). Then set the year to 1999. Save the setup you just created. Turn off your computer. Wait at least five minutes and turn it back on. Again enter the CMOS/Setup/Configuration program. Has the year changed to 2000 and the time to 00:?? (depending on how long you waited)? If so, you have passed one major test. Things are looking up for you.

Let your computer complete its booting sequence with the date still set to the year 2000. Then enter several of the programs that you frequently use and look for anomalies in date-oriented functions. Try to enter a check in your financial management program. Add records that contain dates to your database files. Can you enter a membership date of 1/1/2000, an expiration date of 12/31/2002, a proposal that expires June 15, 2001? Will your fax program show an accurate transmission date on the cover page? Think about the applications that you use. Does your word processor automatically enter the system date on certain style sheets or forms? Ac-

tually test all of your applications that involve dates. If your system passes these tests, your system and the applications you have tested will continue to serve you faithfully after the arrival of 2000 A.D.

This discussion will be continued in future issues of **ComputerConnection**.

Meeting Notes

Our June meeting brought Peter Schenk from Quarterdeck Corporation, traveling to us from California to present CleanSweep, QEMM 9 and Partition-It. Quarterdeck was very generous in providing two full copies of each program as door prizes. One important message Peter communicated was that most Quarterdeck programs are multiplatform, i.e., they all run on Windows 3.x, Windows 95, and Windows NT. So Quarterdeck has not abandoned the Windows 3.x user who has not moved on to Windows 95. You can preview the three programs (and many others) at <http://www.quarterdeck.com>. (In fact, you can download a trial version of CleanSweep and about five other products to enable you to try them yourselves.) Thanks Peter and Quarterdeck for continuing to support user groups.

In addition to the six door prizes that Quarterdeck provided, we had an additional eight to distribute. Meeting attendance continues to be rewarded with valuable knowledge and sometimes a valuable new computing product.

See you on Tuesday, July 8 at 7:30 P.M. at the Rockland Conservatory of Music, 7 Perlman Drive, Spring Valley, NY. ■

WANT TO JOIN THE GROUP? HERE'S HOW!

Annual membership in the Rockland PC Users Group includes a subscription to COMPUTERCONNECTION. Bring your completed application and a check payable to RPCUG to a meeting or mail your application and check to RPCUG at 169 South Main Street, Suite 384, New City, NY 10956-3358.

Name ↓ (please print all information)

Address

Day phone:

Evening phone:

Birthdate(s)

I (We) desire:

- Individual membership \$25
- Joint membership \$30
- Family membership \$35
- Student membership \$15
- Corporate sponsorship \$100
- Renewal Membership No. _____

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

ExecNet, Westchester's outstanding BBS, offers a 25% discount to RPCUG members. To obtain the discount during the on-line subscription procedure, use the RPCUG member number found on the mailing label on the bottom of this page.

ExecNet's access number for new accounts is (914) 667-4567

Survival Specialties, Inc. Stan Smith (914) 634-6618
9 Chestnut Grove Court, New City, NY 10956-2713
We Help You Survive in Today's Electronic World
Hardware - Software - Installation - Servicing - Consulting

Personalized consulting in the areas of applications design, office automation, database development, networking, disaster planning and support services

Software Design Technologies; Bob Sieffert (914) 634-2051

TZ-Link, a Rockland County full Internet Service Provider, offers a 10% discount to RPCUG members. There is a two-week trial period during which service can be cancelled without charge.

For information and to obtain the discount phone 623-1720.



169 South Main Street
Suite 384
New City, NY 10956-3358

Forwarding and Address Correction Requested

DATED MATERIAL

FIRST CLASS MAIL

