Ottawa IBM-PC Users Group

Multi-tasking, multi-user operations

QNX may be computer's friend

You're working on your spreadsheet while your spouse is busy with a word processing program and your son is putting the finishing touches on a high school science report. What's different about this family is that they're all working on the same computer at the same time. While there is only one computer, there are two additional terminals. In a nutshell, that's what QNX is all about.

Grant Courville, of Kanata's Quantum Software Systems Ltd., told members at the March meeting about his company's multi-user, multi-tasking local area network system...QNX.

Courville said there are more than 75,000 QNX systems in 47 countries around the world. QNX brings together a UNIX-like operating system combined with MS-DOS applications providing the ability to support up to 255 PCs and an almost unlimited number of attached terminals.

"In 1981, MS-DOS version 1 occupied about 8k," Courville said. "I understand that version 4 is about 150k in size. QNX, by comparison, is quite small."

Users are not limited to running one program at a time but can run many programs at the same time and each program has its own window. QNX is also compatible 8086, 8088, 80186, 80286, and 80386 technologies including the IBM PS/2, AT, PC, the HP Vectra and similar computers.

PC-DOS compatibility is available for QNX in two ways. DOS may be run as a task under QNX and QNX programs may read and write DOS files as if they were QNX files.

"QNX is not a monolithic system," Courville said. "Instead of one large kernel, QNX consists of a set of co-operating administrator tasks. User programs and other administrators use messages to communicate with one another.

"This modular approach permits system extensions and customization by simply adding new administrative tasks."

QNX operates like a network with messages going back and forth to move data between tasks.

Multi-tasking with a prioritization feature is needed in the world of industrial robotics, for example, where real-time responses can make the difference between a successful operation or dis-

Final call for 1989 membership renewals

by Claude Jarry
OPCUG Membership Chairman

ALL memberships in the OTTAWA IBM-PC USERS GROUP (OPCUG) end on March 31. Consequently, if you haven't renewed your membership, in principle you're no longer a member of OPCUG and this is the LAST Newsletter you will be receiving. Unless, of course, you mail in your renewal by completing the form on the last page and submitting your $20 membership fees ($45 if you want the Diskette-of-the-Month subscription). Or you may renew your membership at the next meeting on Wednesday, April 26, 1989.

Those of you who have been members for more than two

4DOS is a powerful user tool

by Chris Taylor
OPCUG

At various times I have used such programs as CED (A.K.A. command history), DIRNOTES (for annotating directory listings), various sorted directory listing programs, NO (permits an exception to a wildcarded command), SUPER RENAME (for renaming directories), LIST (for viewing files), PUSHDIR/POPDIR (for moving around directories), KEYFAKE (to pass on keystrokes to an applica-

tion), etc.

4DOS is a replacement for COMMAND.COM that enhances most DOS commands and adds more than 30 new internal commands. It has been tested on 8088, 8086, V20, V30, 80286, 80386, under OS/2 and on networks. If you experience a compatibility problem, your $50 registration fee will be refunded.

This program offers on-line help, point-and-shoot file selection for a command, interactive expansion of

wildcard filenames on the command line and a command history from 512 to 8,192 characters.

It also has a flexible wildcard feature. You're looking for a file with a '2' in it but can't remember the complete name of the file. The flexible wildcard allows the command: *2*.* and, following execution, will display all files with a '2' anywhere in the filename.

Multiple commands on a single line and 40 character filenames are just two more of 4DOS features. The program supports monochrome as well as CGA, EGA, VGA with any number of lines or columns per screen. It also supports DOS-compatible networks and most commands will accept multiple arguments such as: DEL *.COM *.EXE. CDD will change the default drive and directory while DESCRIBE can be used for adding file descriptions. The DIR command allows one, two or five column display, will display subdirectories or display subtotals only. EXCEPT allows execution of a command except specified files. MEMORY displays total and available RAM, expanded/extended memory and environment space while MOVE moves files between directories and drives.

GLOBAL allows execution of a command in the current directory and all of its subdirectories while LIST will display a file with a forwards or backwards scrolling feature.

There are also a number of batch files in the program including: KEYSTACK which sends keystrokes to an application as if from the keyboard. rds or backwards scrolling feature.

PageMaker filter

Importing WP5 files now easier

PageMaker users will now be able to import WordPerfect 5 files directly into their publications following the release of the Aldus PageMaker 3.0 Filter/Driver Pack 1.0.

Previously WordPerfect 5 files were saved in a WordPerfect 4.2 format before being imported into PageMaker documents. The filter pack covers both WordPerfect and Smart ASCII files and comes on two 360k 5 1/4" floppy disks and one 800k 3 1/2" disk. Installation is simple with the files going into the PageMaker directory and a simple modification to the WIN.INI file.

The filter allows direct importing of such WordPerfect features as: hyphenation, justification, line spacing, tab set, word and letter spacing as well as: **bold**, *italic*, ~~strikeout~~ and underline features.

Some other features are changed in the process. Both **outline** and **shadow** are imported as **bold** while *redline* becomes *italic*.

SMALL CAPS used in WordPerfect will import as SMALL CAPS in PageMaker and only even font point sizes are supported. Double hyphens (dashes) in WordPer-

fect will import as double hyphens in PageMaker.

Font support has been improved to only add the fonts used in the Wordperfect document to the PageMaker 'TYPE SPECS' dialog box. However, users are still limited to the fonts specified in the Filter/Driver Pack documentation. Because of this constraint, users must apply the attributes they require (ie: **bold**, *italic*, etc.) to the plain versions of the typeface rather than choosing those as fonts.

WordPerfect supports character based styles, but all PageMaker styles are paragraph based. The text will be imported with the proper formatting. The import filter will allow the user to choose whether or not to import the style sheet definitions. If the user does import the style sheets the definitions will be sent to the 'STYLE PALETTE' but they will not be tagged to the text. Users may apply style sheets to individual paragraphs once they're inside PageMaker. Users are asked to refer to the PageMaker User Manual for additional information on PageMaker Styles.

Keeping pace with technology

by Andr Cyr
OPCUG

Aldus, the publisher of PageMaker 3.0, is **offering** both an English Canadian and a French Canadian upgrade of their product with Bitstream Fontware for $160 for Canadian users. With these upgrades you obtain a filter program that permits direct importation of WordPerfect v5.0 text files into Page-Maker. This eliminates the need to save WP5 files in a WP4.2 format for importing into PageMaker.

By itself this announcement is fairly innocent and will go in the "faits divers" columns of any publication. What attracted my attention to this upgrade notice were the disk formats offered: the English version is available on 360K or 1.2meg disks in the 5 1/4 inch format and 720k disks in the 3 1/2 inch format. The French Canadian versions come on 1.2meg disks in the 5 1/4 inch format and 720k disks for the 3 1/2 inch size.

The anomaly is the French Canadian disk format, what happened to the 360K 5 1/4 format...! We can only speculate, at this stage, that a program file or an overlay file broke the 360K barrier.

This is another nail to the coffin of my trustworthy 8088 engine with its dual 360K floppies besides the noticeable degradation in speed performance while running PageMaker 3.0. As previously addressed by Jackson Hibler, in one of his articles, technology is moving so fast... hardware and software-wise... that we are always lagging behind. The day we buy any equipment or software is the same day that equipment or software begins the journey to obsolescence.

I feel that as users we are software driven... We built a brand name loyalty to a short list of trustworthy pieces of software and we migrate to their various reincarnations until... they get to fat to run on our actual platform of hard-

ware equipment. Then we face the dilemma of hardware upgrade...

The French Canadian upgrade of PageMaker 3.0 is typical of this dilemma; obviously the 360K barrier for one or more program/overlay or file has been broken. What do we do next...? This is my second such dilemma in the last month or so. I moved from Super-Calc 4 to SuperCalc 5 and, notwithstanding the publicity that it can work on an 8088 platform, I found the hard way that some of SuperCalc 5 features must be disabled to run "big - 100K-plus" spreadsheets on my 8088 engine with 640K of memory.

My hardware platform is bursting its seams now because of recent software upgrades; any future upgrades in my core software will leave me behind. I have to either be satisfied with my current software as it's working on my hardware or I will have to upgrade my

Membership depends on your continued support

years (about 60 percent of the membership) will have noticed the many improvements that have occurred in recent years... a better-looking and more readable NEWS-LETTER... easier access to THE PUB, OPCUG's very own bulletin board... the great variety of programmes available on the Diskette-of-the-Month or on specialty diskettes... the low prices and variety of bulk purchases... the informative pre-meeting sessions on various subjects as well as with several Special Interest Groups (SIGs), etc. These services are available to members and ONLY TO MEMBERS.

We hope to continue improving things so that the OPCUG will continue as one of the very best User Groups in Canada and, why not, on the whole

continent. But this can only be achieved with the support of the membership. Your failure to renew promptly will not only deprive OPCUG of that support but, more importantly, it will deprive YOU of the many opportunities the Group brings you to improve the command and enjoyment of your computer.

Do yourself a favor. Glance at the label on the envelope you just received. If the **number** appearing above your name is **lower than 463 and is not followed by a letter,** fill-in the renewal form, write your cheque and send them in.

On another subject, members who joined the OPCUG at one of our meetings may not be aware that they can find their name badge on the the table next to the speaker. They should pick up their badges and wear it at our various

activities. For convenience, the badges are color-coded and is related to the initial letter in your family name:

If name starts with the letter A or B your name badge is BLUE. If name starts with the letter C or D your name badge is YELLOW. If name starts with the letter E, F, G or H your name badge is GREEN. If name starts with the letter I, J, K or L your name badge is PURPLE. If name starts with the letter M your name badge is GREY. If name starts with the letter N, O, P or R your name badge is ORANGE. If name starts with the letter S or T your name badge is RED. If name starts with the letter U, V, W or Y your name badge is BLACK. One way not to forget it is to place it with your diskette carrier or the notepad you usually take with you to the meetings.

Is bigger really better?
Upgrades are becoming too costly

engine to a new platform (accelerator/ additional memory board, 80286 or 80386 based engine...) to take advantage of the recent advances in the software world.

As I write this article, I haven't found an answer to this quandary. The odds are, however, that I will move where my core software is going. Such a position means that I will have to think, at the actual pace of technology breakthrough, in term of a complete write-off of my hardware every three to four years. This means, in today's pricing structure, writing off close to $1,000 of capital expenditures per year to stay afloat with the various reincarnations of my software base... an expensive proposition. But I might not be able or willing to refuse it depending on my level of dependency or addictions to my actual software.

(Editor's note: Andr Cyr is quite correct. We can't seem to win. IBM introduces a larger, faster machine with gobs of memory and the software developers jump in with both feet to write software that gobbles up all that memory. Apple users face the same problem as system and application software continues to grow at an alarming rate. We all appreciate the added features of the new software but these features come with a price and, for many of us, quite a high price.)

Protecting your computer

How to protect your computer and modem from power surges will be discussed at the April 26 meeting of the Ottawa IBM-PC Users Group meeting. Don MacMillian of MacCOM Systems Ltd. will talk about power surges and other related topics and is expected to have a variety of hardware protectors at the meeting.

An Intel representative is scheduled for the May 31 meeting and will discuss Intel's role in the manufacturer of computer chips.

New disk prices announced

New Ottawa IBM-PC User Group prices on high quality 360K DSDD generic discs by Kao-Didak. Boxes of 10, complete with labels and write protect tabs for $6.

Others:		
Kao brand 5 1/4"		$14.
Generic high density (AT) 5 1/4"		$15.
Generic 720K 3 1/2"		$20.
Kao brand 720K 3 1/2"		$28.
Kao brand 1.44 meg 3 1/2"		$69.

Diskaroos: a water-resistant, anti-static nylon wallet with 10 rainbow-colored 3 1/2" 720K discs $28. All disc prices include Provincial Sales Tax.

For more information on available computers, software, hardware and accessories: call 225 2630 and ask for Terry, Tim or Suzanne, your OPCUG bulk purchasers. FAX 226 2615.

QNX is loaded

aster.

One feature of QNX is distributed processing which results in all computers on the system acting like one large computer instead of a group of smaller machines.

"Under distributed processing, QNX will actually go to other machines in the network to find the needed memory to complete a task. It will suspend a lower priority job to complete a high priority task," Courville added. "This is an important consideration in any type of multi-user environment."

For more details on QNX, you may contact Courville at 591 3579.

Some comments on clock speeds
Just how fast is that computer?

by Terance P. Mahoney
OPCUG

About every three months someone calls us with a printer that has jammed when the labels stuck to the platen inside the printer. This is usually caused by rolling labels backwards through the printer so that the sharp edge of the platen guide peels them off. With labor rates running at $40 plus per hour, this can be expensive. It can also be avoided.

One solution is not to roll the labels backwards through the printer. A better solution is to slip an ordinary piece of paper through in front of your labels before rolling them back. This will protect both the printer and it also saves labels.

Performance issues

Recently I've seen a lot of ads claim-ing 13 megahertz performance on 10 mghz. systems, or 16 mghz perform-ance on 12 mghz systems, or other similar claims. I think a lot of this is false and misleading. Extra-cost op-tions are available to give you this performance.

If you look under the cover, you'll find that what they're comparing is apples and oranges. Their base system usually uses an inexpensive and slower RAM that has to have a 'WAIT' state included so it will be ready when it is next accessed. This means that the CPU will have to WAIT one operating cycle before it can be accessed again. The upgrade option consists of changing to faster RAM and eliminating this 'WAIT' period.

This gives you a system that is a 'ZERO WAIT' state 10 mghz or 12 mghz system. In terms of memory reads only, this makes them roughly equiva-lent to the claimed 'faster performance' figures if the faster system is using a 'WAIT' state.

They are not and will never be the equivalent to the faster system running at 'ZERO WAIT' states. They're not even as fast as the 'claimed perform-ance' for a system that operates at so-called 'higher' performance levels because, on average, memory is read only at about 30 per cent of the time. Wait states only affect memory ac-cesses. The rest of the time the faster CPU operates at full speed. So does the slower system: but at a slower pace.

Some programs do access memory more or less frequently than the aver-age which would affect any compari-son. Still 'caveat emptor', let the buyer beware: or more appropriate 'caveat canem' beware of the dog.

1989 OPCUG Executive

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Whole Bit TV Show	Sandy Shaw	733 5088

Meetings...

Meetings of the Ottawa IBM-PC Users Group are held on the last Wednesday of the month except in July and De-cember. The meetings are held are available from 7:30 p.m. with the regular meeting be-ginning at 8 p.m. Free parking is available behind the Gothic Building.

The next regular meeting will be on:

May 31.

Ottawa IBM-PC Users Group

3 Thatcher Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Membership Renewal

Name: _____

(Please print or type clearly.)

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Memberships in the Ottawa PC Users Group (OPCUG) are $20 per person per year and include access to the OPCUG Bulletin Board and are valid until March 31, 1990. Members may also subscribe to the OPCUG's Disk of the Month (DOM) service which entitles the subscriber to 10 consecutive DOMs. The DOM service is offered at $25 plus the membership fee of $20 for a total of $45. Please make your cheque payable to the OPCUG and mail it to the address at the top of this form.

Check one:

New :

Renewal :

1989 Membership Fees:

Membership: $20.00

Membership & DOM: $45.00