

COMPUTER CONNECTION

Monthly Newsletter of the
Rockland PC Users Group

Volume 17 Number 10
October 1997

PARSONS TECHNOLOGY'S CIRCUS OF APPLICATIONS

We compute in a time of behemoths. For the home or office PC user, the software field is dominated by just a few big names: Microsoft, Corel, IBM/Lotus, Symantec, Adobe and Micrografx—it's a short list. But another group of entrepreneurial packagers has managed to survive with clever and useful niche products—utilities, system tools, recreational, educational and single-purpose applications. Among this group are Quarterdeck, Broderbund, Sierra, and Parsons Technology.

Parsons Technology, our guest for October, has a standing invitation here. Matt McCann, Parsons' personable presenter, always puts on a fine show. Matt has acceded to our request to load his laptop with lots of applications rather than concentrating on only one or two. So we'll have to watch closely as he juggles them, one after the other. In addition to Family Lawyer, QuickVerse and the latest version of Atomic Clock, we're likely to see Address Book, Announcements, and Medical Drug Reference from Parsons' Home Group and Alarm 95, Calendar Works, FastMove!, and QuickView Plus from the Utilities Group.

So be sure to drop in early on October 14 to get a good seat for watching the Parsons applications circus. ■



Dues Increase Needed

RPCUG, like many user groups across the country, is in a bit of a pickle. Membership is slightly down while expenses are a good bit higher. Something has to give.

The cost of printing and mailing this newsletter is by far the largest item in our budget. ComputerConnection's editor, proofreaders and writers all serve as volunteers. Next month, we will publish a summary of RPCUG's annual income and expenses. In the meantime, after carefully weighing alternatives, and mindful of the clear preference of September's meeting attendees for maintaining the newsletter and activities at least at current levels (and, by a unanimous show of hands, a willingness to pay a little more!), the board has proposed a ten dollar increase in the annual dues.

The proposal for a dues change will be voted at the November meeting. Here are the particulars: annual individual, joint and family memberships are to be increased to \$35, \$40, and \$45 dollars respectively. Student memberships and corporate sponsorships would remain at present levels: \$15 and \$100.

Current members will be offered the opportunity to renew or extend their memberships at the old rates up until December 1, 1997. After that time, new memberships and renewals would be at the higher rates.

Be with us at the October 14 meeting to voice your support or opposition and to cast your vote. ■

MEETING SCHEDULE

Rockland Conservatory of Music 7:30 P.M.

Tuesday, October 14 – Parsons Technology

Tuesday, November 11 – IBM

Tuesday, December 9 – Microsoft Road Show

(All are welcome)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Stan Smith



Membership Surveys

As I mentioned last month, we RPCUG officers, committee heads and SIG leaders really want to know how you feel about our group. Why you remain members. What you feel about our general meetings and the presenters.

At the September meeting we asked a substantial group of members to fill out a short survey about our newsletter. You'll find a summary of their thoughts on page 11 of this issue.

At the October meeting we will ask for your opinion about the contents and format of our monthly meetings, and your thoughts about being asked to volunteer to assist our group.

If you are asked to fill out a survey, please take the two minutes required to complete it. As an incentive, an extra raffle ticket will be handed to you when you return the finished form. These surveys are important to us. We really need to know your feelings about our group.

Newsletter On Our Web Site

Each issue of *ComputerConnection* is available for viewing or downloading from the Rockland PC Users Group Web site: <http://www.rpcug.org>. From the home page, click Newsletters. Once you instruct your browser to connect to our Web site,

you'll see what wonders and information are available for your edification and pleasure. Since ours (like most Web sites) is a work in progress, there are changes most every month. If you haven't visited us on the Web recently, do check out the new look and the new additions.

One reason to do so is to have the earliest possible access to our newsletter. It is usually posted on the Web even before we have the printed copies back from the printer. So if your newsletter has been delayed by that nasty Postal Service, check out the current issue on the Web. You will know about upcoming meetings. You will be able to print it out on your own printer—and it will look very much like the printed copy that you receive when the Postal Service finally decides to deliver it to you. [Hint: sign up for the automatic URL change notification for the newsletter page (accomplished from the RPCUG Home Page) and you will automatically receive an e-mail notification every time a new issue of the newsletter is posted.]

By the way, our Web site also contains new links for senior citizens, search engines, anti-virus program update signature files, general and SIG meeting schedules, and much, much more. Spend some time exploring. And if you have any suggestions, be sure to communicate them to Webmaster Steve Weinberg by clicking on any "e-mail Webmaster" field.

Communications SIG and RPCUG BBS

Until we find a new leader, Communications SIG meetings are suspended. How about one of you volunteering to be the new leader? Contact me at 634-6618 to discuss the very minimal requirements.

Also, our BBS has received little use for quite a while. Since our Web site duplicates much of the information carried on the BBS, we are suspending the BBS opera-

tion. Soon the BBS telephone number will just direct callers to our Web site. After that redirection message has been posted for a while, the BBS will be shut down unless we find another volunteer to run it. Have you ever wanted to be a SysOp? Do you want to check out what that means? Contact me at 634-6618 to discuss what is involved.

Thanks for the Service

Because Stan Tishler (ex-newsletter editor, ex-reviews coordinator, product reviewer, our shareware librarian and board member) needs a rest and some more time to enjoy his grandchildren and the "retired life," he will be continuing his RPCUG participation at a more leisurely pace than in the past. We wish him well and hope that he will quickly recover from his condition of "burnout" to again become an active RPCUG volunteer. Thanks, Stan, for all of the time you spent volunteering your time and knowledge to RPCUG and its members.

Likewise, Jim Mullins (our literature librarian, ex-member-at-large, nominating committee chairman, product reviewer, and meeting flyer designer/producer) is finding that he spends more time at his retirement job than he did before he retired from IBM. He also needs a rest. Thanks, Jim, for your many, many contributions and the volunteering spirit that you represent. We hope that you will soon be able to return to play an active role in our group.

Internet Scam Alert

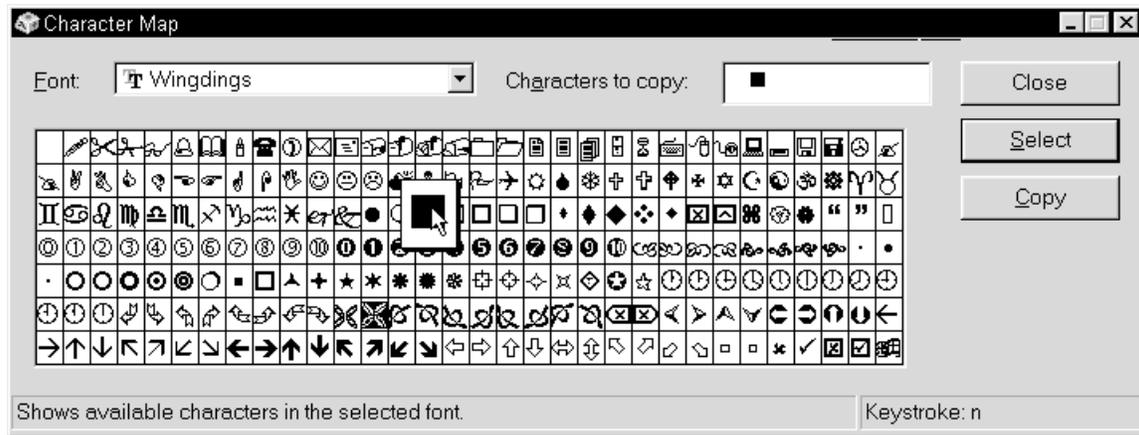
Well, it had to happen. Now those enterprising thieves have found ways to steal people's money via the Internet. Don't let it happen to you.

There are many scams out there, including illegal pyramid schemes, mislead-

(continued on page 10)

THE EDITOR'S DESK

by Sy Ribakove



Have you ever wondered how to get those special characters into your documents that are nowhere to be found on your keyboard—like the little black box that's at the end of each article in this newsletter)? There's an application in your Windows directory called Character Map (CHARMAP.EXE) that makes it easy to find and use these characters. (The major wordprocessors provide a method for accessing some but not all of these characters. But Character Map lets you see every character in a font's character set.)

Here's how its done:

1. In Windows 3.1x it's File/Run and type CHARMAP. In '95 it's Start/Run and type CHARMAP. In '95 you can also click

on Start/Programs/Accessories and select Character Map.

2. Click on the down arrow of the Character Map scroll box to see a list of the fonts currently installed on your system.

3. Select Wingdings (shortcut: type "W") if you are using TrueType fonts or select ZapfDingbats (type "Z") if you are using PostScript fonts.

4. The individual characters are tiny. (Character Map is one of only a few windows that cannot be resized.) But you can magnify one character at a time by clicking on it.

5. To get the special character into your Windows document, use one of the following methods:

a. Click the character and click on Select and Copy. Return to your document and click Edit/Paste (Ctrl-V.) Or:

b. Double-click the character and click Copy. Return to your document and click Edit/Paste (Ctrl-V.) Or:

c. Select the character, make note of the keystroke shown at the bottom-right of the dialog box, return to your document's font menu, choose Wingdings or ZapfDingbats and type the key or keys. If the desired keystroke is something like Alt-0231 (Alt+four numbers), press and *hold* Alt while you type the four numbers *on the keypad*. Remember to return to your original font when you continue typing.

That's all there is to it. ■

OFFICERS

President	Stan Smith
Vice President	Sondra Coulter
Secretary	Gerald F. Lee
Treasurer	Paul Shapiro
Member-at-Large	Jack McDermott

Committees

Programs	Rich Caunitz
Membership	Phil Van Ripper
Webmaster	Steve Weinberg

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

Sy Ribakove

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MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

by Nancy Ribakove

Mosby's Medical Encyclopedia on CD-ROM (\$49.95) from the Learning Company is touted as a "complete home medical reference" by its maker. Mosby (pronounced mose-bee), one of the foremost publishers of medical reference books for professionals, intends the program to be an easily accessible source of medical information for the layperson. Aside from its encyclopedia of medical articles, it contains a Drug Guide, a Handbook of Diseases, and a Body Atlas. It is fairly easy to move from one feature to another. For example, you can click on any word in an article to read its definition. However, the definition feature is linked to a standard dictionary so that in the sentence, "Some cells lack a nucleus when they are mature," you can not only retrieve definitions by clicking on "cells," "nucleus," and "blood," you also get definitions when you click on "some," "lack," "a," and "when." There are pictures, ani-

mations and videos, resource lists, links to medical Web sites and an all-important Search feature.

That's the good news. Here comes the bad. The program is designed to be viewed on an SVGA (800x600) monitor. My 17" monitor was set for 1024x768 which made everything very small—some things way too small. Upon reducing the resolution to 800x600, I was shocked to discover that some of the animations became indecipherable when I clicked buttons to enlarge them. Moreover, I encountered typographical errors everywhere: gallblatter for gallbladder, blader for bladder, etc.

I found the articles not at all written in everyday language, and I was forced to rely on cross-reference links. Maddeningly, there was a button for "Backtrack", but no button for "Forward," so I had to reopen things to see them again.

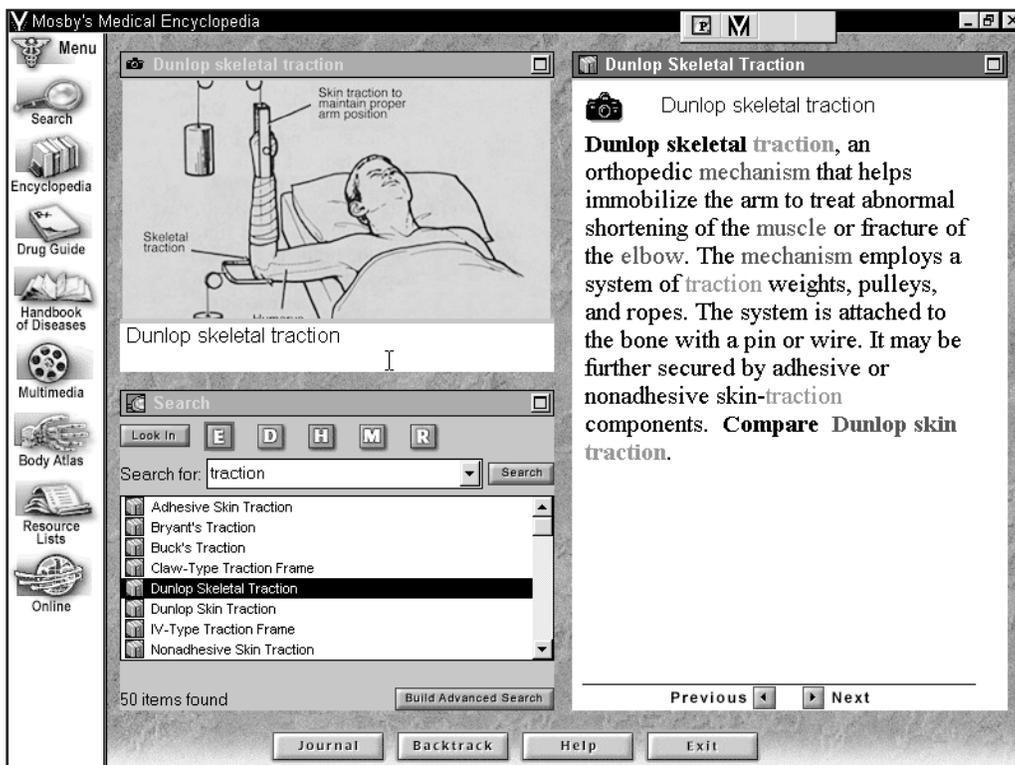
I found the Search feature baffling.

After trying numerous times to select a Boolean operator, I gave up. At another point I was stumped at not being able to retrieve a garden-variety medical definition, when I discovered that, inadvertently, the Dictionary had been deselected; I was in the Thesaurus, contrary to the indication on the display.

I had hoped that the Drug Guide would actually turn out to be useful for home use. Many of us utilize a squad of unrelated specialists who don't always ask what prescription and over-the-counter drugs we use. But the Drug Interaction Guide was not helpful. Drugs were not listed alphabetically but by type—never mind if you don't know your drug's classification. If you were looking up Valium, for instance, you would likely look for it under the category "Tranquilizers," which does not exist. How many of us would look under "Antispasmodics"? In addition, if two drugs, such as Warfarin and penicillin, interact, I had to look up both drugs to discover that the potency of one was affected by the other.

My advice? If you are interested in getting in-depth information about drugs or anatomy, ask for the *Physician's Desk Reference* or *Gray's Anatomy* at your public library. If you want to have up-to-date drug information easily accessible on your computer, the *Medical Drug Reference* CD from Parsons Technology provides excellent material and an intuitive interface. In my book, **Mosby's Medical Encyclopedia** is not a winner, not even a contender.

If anyone is still interested, the program is designed for Windows 3.x or 95. If you are willing to tolerate a slow initial load, it can be run fairly comfortably from the CD. Mouse, sound card and Internet access are all virtual necessities. ■



COMPUTER BOOKSHELF

by Sy Ribakove

WINDOWS ANNOYANCES by David Karp; O'Reilly & Associates; 285 pages; \$29.95; ISBN-1-56592-266-2

A CRASH COURSE IN WINDOWS 95 by Anne Prince; Mike Murach & Associates; 40 pages; \$10.00; ISBN 0-911625-93-93

THE WINDOWS 95 BIBLE by Fred Davis; Peachpit Press; 661 pages; \$29.95; ISBN 0-201-88388-0

WINDOWS 95 ANSWERS! by Martin S. and Carole Boggs Matthews; Osborne McGraw-Hill; 428 pages; \$29.95; ISBN 0-07-882399-4

Two Visual QuickStart Guides:

ACROBAT 3 FOR MACINTOSH AND WINDOWS by Ted Alspach; Peachpit Press; 193 pages; \$16.95; ISBN 0-201-68848-4

PHOTOSHOP 4 FOR WINDOWS by Elaine Weinman and Peter Lourekas; Peachpit Press; 318 pages; \$19.95; ISBN 0-201-68842-5

Bookstore shelves bulge with Windows 95 titles—something for every user. On this month's review list, the one that really grabbed me was *Windows Annoyances*. It is based on the Windows Annoyances Web site, www.creativelement.com/win95ann/ and it is most certainly a book for those who want the operating system's interface to reflect their own personal preferences, rather than some Microsoft programmer's. If you are an intermediate to advanced user who is not timid about mucking around in Windows 95's Registry, you'll find such tricks as how to make the Control Panel more accessible, how to reduce the size of the Help folder without



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.

reducing its usefulness, how to compact the Registry, and how to get rid of some of the more irritating application splash screens. There are scores of arcane but oh so useful tweaks. So read. Tinker. Enjoy.

At the opposite end of the '95 spectrum is *A Crash Course in Windows 95*. This inexpensive primer was designed specifically for the unschooled Windows 95 user—for example, the employee who's been given twenty-four hours to move from Windows 3.1 to Win95. All the basic '95 skills are covered: how to log in, perform the six basic mouse actions, switch from one window to another, and so on. Each specific task is accompanied by a short exercise that assumes no prior Windows 95 knowledge. Mike Murach, the publisher, is known for producing finely-honed computer books; this modest volume continues that tradition. Call 800-221-5528 to order a copy, especially if you think you've finally got an upgrade to Windows 95 in your future.

For the user who completes (or doesn't need) a crash course in basics, Fred Davis' *Windows 95 Bible* fills in the blanks of insight and understanding. Davis not only tells us how to do things in '95, he tells us *why* we need to do these things. The book is light in touch, easy to read and easy to understand. Chapter headings like *Ready, Set, Run* and *Playing With Your New Toys* contribute to the easygoing style. There's also a fine index and illustrations just where you need them. This "bible," like the holier scriptures, is designed to be a comfort in time of need.

Windows 95 Answers! is a book of another color. Its authors, working with an international tech support company, have come up with answers to more than four hundred commonly-asked Windows 95 questions. Among the top ten: "What do I do if an application I am running stops responding?" "I deleted a file by mistake.



Can I get it back?" And "Do I have to re-install my applications after installing Windows 95 on a system that had Windows before?" Clear answers are accompanied by numbered lists of the steps needed to perform each action or task.

Windows 95 Answers! unravels some of Windows 95's toughest conundrums: how to access the desktop when it is hidden by other windows, how to find what systems resources are currently available, and how to get older Windows applications to run under Windows 95. The range of topics and solutions is vast. New '95 users and experienced users, too, will find essential material here.

Time was, you bought a major application and you got a good-sized manual. Read it, cried the harried tech support people. Not for us, we said. So now we've got what we deserve: online documentation to scroll through for answers that are rarely helpful. Graphics applications, especially, do not give up their secrets easily—functionality and preferences are often hidden deep in submenus and palettes—and so I was especially pleased to receive the Visual QuickStart Guides to Adobe Acrobat 3 and Photoshop 4 from Peachpit Press. They proved enormously helpful, shining

(continued on page 11)

PUZZLE MAKER

by Stan Tishler

Plexus Word Weaver 2.0 is a crossword puzzle construction program. I've used similar programs in the past, but this is by far the best. Everything is adjustable—the size of the squares, the size of the numbers, the shape of the puzzle (it will make symmetrical designs or not), the clues (these can be imported into a word processor as regular text), the title, etc.

You can add words of your own by placing them in the puzzle and then letting the program complete the construction. You can also set up a theme file and instruct the program to construct a puzzle using as many of your theme words as it can fit. I designed the puzzle on this page with our users group in mind. Watching the program fill in the words was fascinating as it went from section to section, trying combinations until it got the right combination. When it couldn't, it told me which of my words wouldn't fit, and

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20				21						22				
			23					24	25			26		
27	28	29		30		31	32		33		34			
35			36		37			38				39	40	41
42						43					44			
45				46	47				48		49			
			50				51			52		53		
54	55	56		57		58			59		60			
61			62			63	64	65				66	67	68
69					70						71			
72						73					74			
75						76						77		

allowed me to place them elsewhere or remove them entirely. If I didn't like a section of the puzzle, I could simply erase it.

Plexus Word Weaver has a large vocabulary—more than 50,000 words—and more than 50,000 stock clues. Some clues were too esoteric for my taste; these were easy to change. The program is available from the manufacturer, Variety Games, Inc. (800-229-3939) for \$49.95 plus shipping and handling. It works with Windows 3.x and Win95 and requires 5–7MB of disk drive space.

If you like crossword puzzles, this program is a gem. You can use **Word Weaver** to create your own puzzle using only your own words, or you can let **Word Weaver** build a puzzle out of a combination of your words and its own. Or you can just sit back and watch the program design a puzzle for you. ■

ACROSS

- 1 Air pollution
- 5 Boa
- 10 Talk back
- 14 "as you ___"
- 15 Not allowed
- 16 Can fish
- 17 Lager
- 18 Our Gang
- 19 City in Yemen
- 20 Rainiest
- 22 Preserved
- 23 Tibetan butter source
- 24 Be incorrect
- 26 Attempt
- 27 The read only kind
- 30 Loch ___ monster
- 33 Mo. before B-T-S
- 35 Modify
- 37 Some have paddles
- 42 Not any
- 43 Oft misspelled possessive
- 44 Identify
- 45 Dehydrated produce
- 49 Zeus' wife
- 50 Cow sound
- 51 Our treasurer
- 53 Thieves' hideout
- 54 Melancholy

- 57 Sleep state
- 59 Spy guys
- 61 Plays music or runs programs
- 63 Reviving
- 69 Foray
- 70 For storage
- 71 Portal
- 72 Mature
- 73 Lazy person
- 74 Decorative needle case
- 75 Dining hall
- 76 Layers
- 77 Beach stuff

DOWN

- 1 Helmsman's heading (abbrev.)
- 2 Gather
- 3 White stuff inside
- 4 Our secretary
- 5 Not balls
- 6 Mantle
- 7 What children learn
- 8 The way
- 9 Driving hazard
- 10 Nova
- 11 Scrutinize
- 12 Make a face
- 13 Our veep
- 21 Staff
- 22 Beat severely
- 25 Good memory
- 27 Tear
- 28 Smell
- 29 Small
- 31 Mix
- 32 Frame
- 34 Awed exclamation
- 36 Swarm
- 38 Eur_____
- 39 Copied
- 40 Ripped up
- 41 Our leader
- 46 Residence hall
- 47 Enemy
- 48 Those who make pleats
- 52 Untruth
- 54 Beat it
- 55 Old saying
- 56 Takes away water
- 58 ___ Gras
- 60 S. A. range
- 62 Chances of winning
- 64 Deceit
- 65 State positively
- 66 Small particle
- 67 Person, place or thing
- 68 Crossed lines
- 70 Morse code unit

ADOBE STREAMLINE

by Sy Ribakove

I do most of my desktop publishing with Adobe PageMaker. My PostScript screen and printer fonts are managed by Adobe Type Manager. (PostScript, created by Adobe, is the *lingua franca* of commercial publishing.) **ComputerConnection** is printed on a PostScript printer. The online version is created with Adobe Acrobat. I struggle for an hour each day to become a bit more skillful with Adobe Photoshop. I am locked into Adobe. Since I spend so much time with Adobe applications, you might think I couldn't possibly be impartial as a reviewer of a new Adobe release. We'll see.

The product is **Adobe Streamline 4.0**. Its mission is tracing—turning bitmapped graphics into (usually) smaller PostScript vector images. Other computer programs, notably CorelDRAW and Micrografx Graphics Suite offer tracing modules, but **Streamline** is considered the very best of this class. The magic that Streamline accomplishes on a computer is, basically, what kids used to do with a pencil and tissue paper.

To understand the value of computer tracing, we need to understand some graphics essentials. There are two graphics types: *vector* and *raster*. **Vector** graphics are stored in the computer as a set of formulas describing the individual shapes in an image. To view or print a vector graphic, the computer converts the mathematical formulas into visible dots. Since the dots don't have to be created until the moment of viewing or printing, a vector image can be enlarged without loss of quality. Vector images are created and manipulated in draw-type programs. They always appear at the highest resolution of a monitor or printer.

You need a paint-type program to create or edit raster images. In a raster, or bitmapped image, the dots are predefined. The

major improvement over the previous version is its ability to isolate individual sections of a graphic and apply different tracing methods to each.

For the nonprofessional, however, using **Adobe Streamline** is very much like using Adobe's other high-end products. There is little instruction provided and one is faced with a very steep learning curve—skills are acquired mostly by trial and error. It's like browsing in Sears' tool department. Without the necessary knowledge and skills, all those tempting drills, band saws, sanders and nail drivers will ruin lots of good lumber before they produce a usable piece of carpentry.

Perhaps that's why a cottage industry of third-party books has grown up around Adobe products. Walk into Barnes & Noble or Waldenbooks and you're likely to find fifteen expensive books on Photoshop, ten on PageMaker—but, unfortunately, none on **Streamline**.

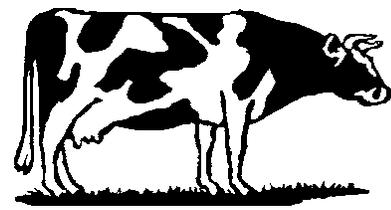
Adobe has made a halfhearted attempt at orienting the less-skilled user. A dialog box offers "presets" for tracing certain kinds of images. However, the choices are limited and require a knowledge that few newcomers possess. The manual provides a tutorial and the necessary sample images are installed on the hard drive. I completed the tutorial and was left with a feeling of awe at the technology, but wondered, "What do I do next?" The Help utility was not at all forthcoming. Keystroke shortcuts were not explained; they just flashed by on the menus. The indispensable keystrokes for zooming in and out (Ctrl+ and CTRL- did not function on my keypad, as they do in Photoshop; after poking around a while, I discovered that they worked if I used the top row keys for plus and minus.



125K raster image (TIF)

resolution is set. If we enlarge or shrink a bitmapped image, we are likely to end up with jagged edges or unpleasant moiré patterns. Tracing turns a bitmapped image into a vector image, thus avoiding these pitfalls.

Suffice it to say that **Streamline** does a superb job of tracing. The new version has a vastly improved interface, performs very crisply on my 133 MHz Pentium machine, and is drag-and-drop compatible with Adobe's other major graphics packages. Its



21K traced vector image

In the end, to make use of **Streamline**, you pretty much need to know exactly what you want to do and how best to accomplish it. You also need some heavy-hitting hardware: a Pentium or faster processor, 32MB or more of RAM, and a 24-bit or greater video card.

If you've got the knowledge and computing power, and an application that can print EPS files, Adobe **Streamline 4.0** offers all the tracing functionality anyone could wish for. ■

MAKING TOASTERS

Humor from the Internet

If IBM made toasters:

They would want to provide one big toaster, where people bring bread to be submitted for overnight toasting. IBM would claim a worldwide market for five, maybe six toasters.

If Xerox made toasters:

You could toast one-sided or double-sided. Successive slices would get lighter and lighter. The toaster would put jam on your bread for you.

If Radio Shack made toasters:

The staff would sell you a toaster, but not know anything about it. Or you could buy all the parts to build your own toaster. They would also ask you for your address and phone number, but are not sure why.

If Hewlett-Packard made toasters:

They would market the reverse toaster, which takes in toast and gives you regular bread.

If Sony made toasters:

The ToastMan would be barely larger than the single piece of bread it was meant to toast, and could conveniently be attached to your belt.

If Timex made toasters:

They would be cheap, small quartz crystal wrist toasters that could take a licking and keep on toasting.

If Intel made toasters:

They would come out with a revolutionary new heating element every month that toasts twice as fast as the previous one—making your old toaster obsolete.

And of course, If Microsoft made toasters:

Every time you bought a loaf of bread, you would have to buy a new toaster. You wouldn't have to take the toaster home, but you'd have to pay for it anyway. Toaster 95 would weigh 1,500 pounds (hence requiring a reinforced steel kitchen countertop), draw enough electricity to power a small city, take up most of the space in your kitchen, claim to be the first toaster that lets you control how light or dark you want your toast to be, and it would secretly interrogate your other appliances to find out who made them.

Everyone would hate Microsoft toasters, but nonetheless would still buy them since most of the good bread only works with their toasters. ■



COREL VENTURA 7: THE OFFICIAL GUIDE by Ed Brown, John Faunce, & Carol Lovelady; Osborne McGraw-Hill; 870 pages; \$34.99; ISBN 0-07-882169-X

It was January 1990, and I searched the old IBM headquarters on 42nd Street for my Ventura 2.0 Newsletter Workshop. A kindly gentleman directed me to the sixth floor, tipped his hat, and said "Happy tagging!" Many thousands of tags and six versions later, I am still tagging happily. Other software packages have embraced the concept of tags and style sheets (the ability to specify paragraph attributes and apply them at will); we Ventura junkies knew from the beginning that we were married to styles for life.

Ventura has always been the most powerful of the desktop publishing packages, but also the most intimidating and infuriating. Much of the problem was created by its having been passed from Xerox to Ventura, Inc. and finally to Corel, juggling new operating systems, ever-changing support options and some not-

so-good manuals. Now that Ventura 7 has arrived, it towers over everything earlier. Learning to use it is a lot like brain surgery. But—we have this book!

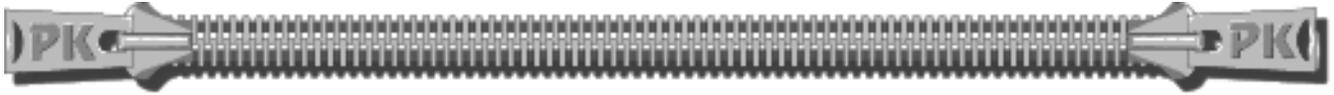
Written by three longtime Ventura devotees, it convinced me that I was home at last. While lots of user input makes it friendly and readable, the pickiest of technical issues are covered. The descriptions and instructions of the new Ventura stuff have my mouth watering: graphics and word processing capabilities, database publishing, version control, web publishing, even CD-ROM creation are included. Best of all, I have been able to find answers to both the simplest and the most technical questions on my list.

The Official Guide is the answer to a Ventura addict's prayer. Its descriptions of Ventura's uncanny ability to look and behave like other page layout programs leads me to suggest that all you Quark and PageMaker people ought to pick up a copy and browse—and see what this Ventura fuss is all about.

Reviewed by Marian Baade

PKZIP FOR WINDOWS

by Jim Mullins



If I were to ask, what is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words “zip” and “unzip,” most people might say, a dress, a fly or a freezer bag. But the computer nerd would say without hesitation, “compress,” “expand” and “it’s free.”

Phillip Katz’ PKZIP has been around for a long time as a shareware product as well as an over-the-counter product. In the early days it was primarily used to reclaim precious hard drive space, squeeze large files onto low-capacity diskettes, back up hard drives and transmit files to other computer users. With the introduction of multi-gigabyte hard drives, the thrust has been more towards reducing the size of files for backing up, archiving, and transmission on the Internet.

I have been using an old DOS version of PKZIP I acquired many years ago. It wasn’t until I received this package for review that I realized how many changes had been made in the interim and how many platforms PKZIP can run on.

PKZIP for Windows 2.50 includes 16-bit and 32-bit installation programs. The 16-bit setup is for Windows 3.x and requires 4MB of RAM. The 32-bit setup is for Windows 95 with 8MB of RAM and Windows NT 3.51+ with 16MB of RAM. All require 1MB of free disk space. The program is also fully compatible with PKZIP for DOS. One can also purchase a version for OS/2.

PKZIP for Windows 2.50 has many features. It can create spanned ZIP files. A spanned ZIP file resides on two or more floppy disks or other removable media (such as a removable hard disk). It can also create self-extracting spanned files. A self-extracting file is an .EXE file that contains extraction code right in the file. You don’t need PKZIP on your system to extract the files from a self-extractor.

PKZIP can now retain and restore Windows 95 and Windows NT long file names. Windows 95 and NT 4.0 users can create, open and extract ZIP files from within Explorer. Clicking the right mouse button activates a menu of the most frequently used features. You can quickly and easily copy or move files from one ZIP archive to another without having to manually extract and recompress the individual files. PKZIP for Windows can be forced to store standard MS-DOS file names. This allows Windows 95 and Windows NT users to create ZIP files that are compatible with systems running Windows 3.1x.

When you click on a ZIP file, its contents are displayed in a customizable grid format. You can choose what information to display, column width, and the font to use. From the grid you can select files individually by file name, by size or by date. The

selected file then can be opened within its associated application without having to first decompress the entire archive.

I recently scanned a lot of old family photos for a family history in honor of my Dad’s ninetieth birthday. When I PKZipped this large graphics-loaded file as a test, I got a 27% savings, which meant I had just saved 8MB of hard disk space. A similar test on a word processing directory gave me a high of 81% for text files and a low of 10% for a high resolution graphics file. The overall savings on the directory was 37% or 1MB. I also opened a ZIP file that I had created with the old shareware version and, to my surprise, its contents were displayed in the Windows grid format and I was able to manipulate the files as if I had just zipped them with version 2.50. I was impressed.

Besides the registered versions, the package contains a shareware self-extracting file of both the 16-bit and 32-bit versions of PKZIP. A separate program is provided to uninstall PKZIP for Windows. This is definitely a must-have whether you buy it for \$49 or pick it up to evaluate as shareware. ■

AND KEEP IN MIND

October

- 14 General Meeting; Parsons Technology; 7:30 P.M.
- 15 OS/2 SIG; 7:30 P.M.; 634-6618 for directions
- 16 Investment SIG; 7 P.M.; UCS, 1st Floor., 25 Smith St., Nanuet
- 21 Windows 95 SIG; 7-9 P.M.; Pearl River Library
- xx Communications SIG; No October Meeting



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PRESTO! PAGE MANAGER SUITE

by Stan Tishler

Here's an interesting group of programs. There are eight modules: *Page Manager*, *Page Image*, *Forms*, *Color Fax*, *Page Filer*, *Word Linx*, *Biz Card* and a special cut-down version of *Kai's Power Goo* (reviewed in the June 1997 issue as a stand-alone program.)

The premise is that all of one's scanning needs can be met with this single suite. How well that premise becomes reality we shall soon see. The program loaded easily from the distribution CD-ROM and took about 30MB of disk space. I installed it into Windows 95 but it will also run under Windows 3.x with the exception of *Power Goo* which requires Windows 95. Obviously, a scanner is essential.

You use *Page Manager*, the main module, to scan images, text or forms. The images were better than what I get scanning into Adobe Photoshop—clear and sharp. The OCR module was not very good. The scanned type displayed on the screen was clear and readable; however, when converted to text it was, at best, poor, making it much easier to type in the information than trying to correct the poorly-recognized text.

From *Page Manager* you can send scanned images or text to a printer, to a

fax, to your e-mail service, or you can scan a form, fill it out and then send it on its way. This you can do by dragging the picture to a printer, fax, e-mail or OCR icon, or to another module named at the bottom of the screen. This works well; the ease of movement from one area to another is truly outstanding. By the way, the OCR module supports eleven languages. But that doesn't matter since after the OCR processing finishes, everything looks like Greek. It's a shame that a useful concept is ruined by a poorly-implemented OCR engine.

Page Filer is another useful module. From your scanner you can scan to a word processor or fax, copy, capture and edit images, print and store documents, and search for and retrieve them. But it's mainly a filing system that lets you set up projects in cabinets, drawers and files. At a glance you see the entire structure; moving documents around is simple and intuitive. Just as with *Page Manager*, you can drag and drop a file to any module in the suite.

Page Image is a competent image-processing program that operates on photographs, drawings and other graphics. Most of the tools found in paint programs are available. While not as all-encompassing as Photoshop (what is?) it does a good job of retouching photos and other graphics. Your finished product can be saved in seven different file formats.

Word Linx is the OCR engine described above. The documentation does not state that you should do your text scanning at your scanner's maximum resolution. I tried all kinds of documents and could not find one that was readable after *Word Linx* got through with it. I do not have this problem with Xerox's *Textbridge* or Caere's *Omnipage*!

Strangely, when I scanned in business cards, the results were much better. You

scan in the card at the highest resolution—the program requests 400 dpi which I think is unreasonable—and then drag it to the *Biz Card* module. While some corrections were necessary, standard business cards without too many curlicues did fairly well—only two corrections on one card, none on a second and one on a third.

I tested the *Color Fax* module twice, once with a fax machine which, of course, printed in black and white and once with a fax/modem that received the fax in black and white. The documentation indicated that unless the receiving party also was using the *Color Fax* module, this was a normal occurrence.

At a price of \$49.95, **Presto! Page Manager Suite** gives you quite a bit for your money. If your OCR needs are not too demanding, this is an easy-to-use, well-designed group of scanning programs. ■

President (continued from page 2)

ing and bogus credit repair services, and work-at-home opportunities.

Even more insidious is a recent scheme that involved lengthy long distance telephone calls to Moldova—yes, that is a real country, a former part of the Soviet Union. The scam worked like this: some nefarious Web sites suggested that you should download special “free” picture viewing software. That software would actually disable your modem's speaker and then surreptitiously dial a telephone number in Canada, which in turn generated a charge for a call to Moldova, at a cost of over two dollars per minute. This scheme generated more than \$1 million in illicit profits, all taken from the pockets of unsuspecting net surfers.

Be very careful, and surf wisely and intelligently. (continued on page 11)



NEWSLETTER SURVEY

The newsletter survey taken at the September meeting produced gratifying results. The first twenty-nine members who signed in after 7:15 P.M. were asked to complete a short questionnaire. They were rewarded for their effort with extra raffle tickets.

When the executive board developed the survey in August, the idea was to get a sense of which newsletter items might be cut if it became necessary to reduce its size. Even though we have no paid staff, the newsletter is the single largest item in our budget. The costs accrue from postage, printing and label stock.

Overwhelmingly, those completing the survey indicated that they enjoyed the newsletter the way it was. The president's and editor's columns received high marks. Most respondents found the reviews worthwhile. There was a definite thumbs-down on receiving the newsletter as an e-mail attachment or in downloading it from our Web site; almost all respondents wanted to continue receiving their newsletters in the mail. Additional features were requested—material specifically targeted to new users, profiles of members, and articles reporting on the computing experiences of other members of our users group.

These are the statements that produced the largest number of positive answers.

I rely on the newsletter to keep me up to date about RPCUG events.....	27
I look forward to reading the President's Message on page 2	22
I look forward to reading the Editor's column on page 3	19
I think we should have more articles targeted to beginners	20
I think we should have more articles for advanced users	9
I enjoy and look forward to reading the product reviews.....	19
I enjoy reading profiles of members ...	20
I like reading about the computing experiences of others	18
I would prefer to continue receiving my newsletter by mail	27
I usually read ComputerConnection cover to cover	21

Subsequent developments at the meeting and under consideration for the immediate future may make it unnecessary to change the newsletter—either its size or its quality. See a related topic in the President's Message on page 2. ■

President *(continued from page 10)*

Meeting Notes

In September, Intel laid out their CPU processor time line for the next several years. (Today, as I write this column, Intel is supposed to make a bombshell announcement of a huge new technical breakthrough that will amend Moore's law. Moore's law states that the processing power in a computer chip will double every eighteen months while the price remains constant. I wonder if this announcement will change the time line that Intel presented.)

October will find Matt McCann, from Parsons Technology, returning to wow us with many of their clever and helpful products. (I'll bet we even get to see the newly improved Atomic Clock!) Rather than looking at one or two applications in depth, we are going to be treated to a smorgasbord of Parsons' offerings. We will see very basically what the programs do and the functionality that they provide. This will assist our understanding of what a truly rich array of software is available at a low, low price—all of Parsons' titles are very reasonably priced, even more so with the generous user group discounts for meeting attendees.

See you on **Tuesday, October 14** at 7:30 P.M. at the Rockland Conservatory of Music, 7 Perlman Drive, Spring Valley. ■

Like magic? <http://pw2.netcom.com/~sleight/rabbit1.html>

Computer Books *(continued from page 5)*

a clear, bright light into every corner of the applications' interfaces. The Acrobat guide helped me prepare the electronic version of this newsletter for our group's Web site. It contained information I had been unable to locate in the Acrobat Help files. The Photoshop guide provided step-by-step instructions and very exceptional (and sometimes gorgeous!) illustrations of every major Photoshop capability. I keep these guide books right next to my computer so that I can refer to them quickly when I need

to investigate a new procedure or refresh my recollection of an old one. Nicely done, Peachpit.

So—lots of reading this month. Unless I get some offers of help with the books that are sent to us for review, I'll just have to keep the goodies for myself. Members, if you are interested in reviewing a book or two, and can put together a reasonable sentence or three, contact me. Book reviews need 200–300 words. As always, my e-mail and postal addresses are at the bottom of page 3. ■

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.

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