

MICROPOLIS USERS GROUP

MUG Newsletter # 1 - August 1980

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Gentlemen:

I guess you can call this the start of the Micropolis Users Group (MUG). The response to the ad was not overwhelming - five people to be exact. Never-the-less, even if it didn't get any larger, the six of us could exchange information either through the newsletter or directly to each other. I'm sure the membership can expand, however. A major producer of Micropolis S/W has offered to mail a brochure describing the MUG. There is also the letter-to-the-editor path. I'll try and work both those areas.

The primary purpose of this first newsletter is to poll the membership for their ideas, opinions, and degree of participation. Use the attachment, which is intended for possible separate mailout. The first question (directory) assumes that members might wish to correspond directly to each other on interests which might be too specific to cover well in a general newsletter. We have a common point - Micropolis drives - but from there we diverge into unique mainframes and S/W, especially applications S/W. The second question (loan of the directory) assumes that I might receive more cooperation in discussions with suppliers if I were able to repay them with a list of good prospects.

The next two main objects of my attention at this time are a BASIC compiler from Systemation, and the hard disk from Micropolis. The compiler may be released by the time you receive this. Tentatively priced at \$345, it isn't for the average game player. More on these next month.

My personal areas of interest, at least at this time, are Micropolis system explanations and applications and utility programs for that system. While I have CP/M (it came with one of the computers) I've never taken the time to figure out how to use it. The Micropolis system seems powerful enough. My only objection is the lack of applications software. I'd prefer to leave the covering of CP/M to LIFELINES.

This brings me to the subject of Systemation, Inc. (PO Box 75, Richton Park, IL 60471). Systemation has a set of six utilities, all of which I have, all of which have proven useful. I can discuss them further in future issues, if desired. More importantly, they have just released SORT/A, an assembly language sort, which is callable by BASIC. In my application of the computers, I do a lot of sorting - presently by BASIC routines. If my understanding is correct, SORT/A will shorten my sort times, for 2000 6-char strings, from one hour to ten seconds. Now that's what I call a major improvement in productivity. I have the module on order and will discuss it next month.

I really don't know how to price the membership fee for the group. The only other group I belong to (PROTEUS) charges \$18 a year for bi-monthly newsletters. This won't be as polished or as big and \$18 seems too high so I'll go with \$12 for monthly newsletters. I think that should cover reproduction, postage (as long as the newsletter

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stays a reasonable size), phone, and misc. Advertising may be an additional cost if I obtain some mailing lists. There's probably a few costs I don't know about - we'll see.

There's very little chance that I can personally generate enough material to fill a newsletter every month. I need you people to submit some copy. Fast - like get something back to me in a week. A month passes pretty quickly. A lot of subjects would take many pages of text and listings to adequately cover. These can be broken into monthly segments. If you have a contribution, please indicate when you could submit it.

According to the format ordering codes of Lifeboat, at least Blackhawk, CDS Versatile 3B & 4, COMPAL-80, Exidy Sorcerer, Nylac, and Vector MZ use Micropolis disks. Add these to all the "add-on" systems and you've got a lot of users with similar systems. I say similar - they are nearly identical, at least for MOD II, but all the mainframes have their own I/O ports, screen manipulation codes, and usually their own monitor routines. To be able to pass programs among ourselves we need to standardize some coding techniques.

For instance, to clear the screen on my SOL I write PRINT CHAR\$(11). For my Vector it's PRINT CHAR\$(4). So instead of writing either I write -

C=11: REM - Clear screen: Set = 11 for SOL; = 4 for Vector
as one of the first statements of the programs. Then I use PRINT CHAR\$(C) throughout the program. Similarly, I look at the keyboard with an IN(K) and -

K=252: REM - Keyboard input: Set = 252 for SOL; = 1 for Vector
I have to modify these two variables, C & K, when I move a program from one system to another. I'm sure there's some variable in RES that I could PEEK at which would identify the machine. Then I could set C & K with an IF statement, rather than manually.

Let's have your comments and ideas. Specifically, how does one convert back and forth from MOD I to MOD II?

8/1/80