EUGENE *PCjr* CLUB

NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 50024, Eugene, OR 97405

MEETING
AGENDA

The FIRST meeting for 1997 of the Eugene PCjr Club will be held at the Church of Christ, 2424 Norkenzie Road, on Thur. January 9th. Setup will begin at 6:30 and the meeting at 7pm.

The main program will be "Using IBM's Graphing Assistant and Drawing Assistant with Writing Assistant."

OFFICERS

President . . . .
           Charles Coury
Vice President. . . . .
           Lynn Miles
Treasurer and Company
   Store. . . . . Phil Janz
Disk Librarian. . . . .
           Mike Ruiz
Modem Captain. . . .
           Mike Ruiz
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           Helen Fry
Newsletter Editor . . .
           Louie Levy
Publisher and Production
   Staff. . . . . Warren and
   Juanita Hampton

Charley's Corner
by Charles Coury

Happy New Year!

Visit the Eugene PCjr Club's Home Page at
http://www.efn.org/~pcjrclub/

As IBM's PCjr Computer begins it's 13th year,
the Eugene PCjr Club
wishes you and all of Junior's family a

Very Happy New Year!

Charley
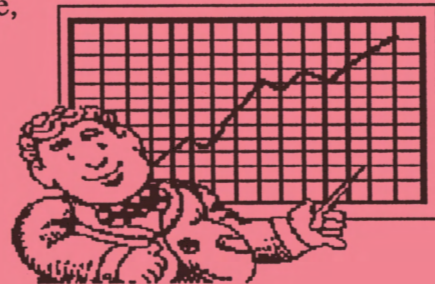
JANUARY CLUB MEETING PROGRAM

Phil Janz and Lynn Miles

IBM developed eight Assistant Series Programs, all of which will run on the IBM PCjr. Separately, each Assistant Series program is an effective tool designed to help you as a user make the best use of your time and effort. Assistant Series programs can be combined in order to perform an even broader range of production tasks.

Most Club members use IBM's *Writing Assistant* as a word processing program for their everyday use. Lynn Miles and Phil Janz will demonstrate *Graphing Assistant* and *Drawing Assistant*, and then make every attempt to show how the results from each program can be imported into *Writing Assistant* to enhance your document (letters, reports, papers, home work, brochures, etc.) that has been created through *Writing Assistant*.

Graphing Assistant is a graphics program that presents data in line, bar and pie charts.

Drawing Assistant is also a graphics program that can be used to create and edit attractive drawings for business, school or personal use. With a mouse you can select or create patterns to fill your drawing shapes and choose different brush styles, colors, and different text styles and sizes.

At this month's meeting, we will be presented with an overview of these software programs made by IBM. As a group, the Assistant collection of programs may well have been the first "works" programs on the marker. To use today's terminology, they were the first of the "office suites." And, they were made so they could be used on the PCjr Computer!

Just What Are Those Combo Cartridges?

Originally offered by PC Enterprises, the Combo Cartridge Version 3.0 contained the elements of three other separate cartridges sold by PC Enterprises, the Quicksilver Cartridge, the Keyboard Buffer Cartridge and the jrVideo Cartridge. Each of these cartridges originally sold for $29.95 plus PC Enterprises' $5 handling charge.

Way back in the Dark Ages of Computing, PC Enterprises came out with a Combo Cartridge. Later, it came out with Version 2, and still later, Version 3. So, when we look at these Combo Cartridges, we need to be aware of which version we are talking about.

All of these Combo Cartridges add features to your PCjr. Using them, you will have things like faster boot-ups, more speedy screen writes, and an effective keyboard buffer. These are just some of the advantages you gain when using these cartridges that plug into the front of your PCjr.

The Combo Version 1.0 combined the Keyboard Buffer and jrVideo cartridges that PC Enterprises sold. Next, they added the Quicksilver functions and called it Version 2.0. Last came the Version 3.0 which included all of these features plus those of the Compatibility Cartridge into one unit.

Just what do these cartridges do? Well, turn to the next page and let's take a look.

The Quicksilver feature provided by these cartridges replaces part of Junior's POST test; the part that checks your PCjr's memory twice, with a faster one. It also cancels that beep you hear on boot-up, a nice plus! One result of all this is a much faster booting process.

The Quicksilver feature also modifies the keyboard bios, eliminating one of our PCjr's incompatibilities with some software that was written for other computers.

The jrVideo feature speeds up the computing we do by accelerating the writing of information to Junior's screen. The jrVideo Cartridge was one of the first video accelerators on the market. Boosting these screen writes is why the jrVideo Cartridge is effective in boosting the overall speed of your PCjr.

Other features provided by jrVideo include the ability to boot in "PC Compatible mode," a routine designed especially for faster text display with DOS, and a "graphics mode" which allocates more memory to the video buffer.

The Keyboard Buffer solves the annoying problem caused by typing while your disk drive is spinning. As most Juniors don't have DMA, they can't process keyboard input and read or write to disk at the same time. The Keyboard Buffer stores keyboard input while the disk drives are working and then feeds keyboard data to the microprocessor when the drives are not in use. This allows us to keep typing without losing characters or being halted by beeps. The Keyboard Buffer also prevents four DOS bugs and two BIOS bugs that cause our Juniors to crash.

While the individual cartridges originally sold for $29.95, the Combos cost more. The Version 1.0 sold for $54.95, the Version 2.0 for $69.95 and Version 3.0 was $89.95.

The last we heard, these cartridges were still being sold by PC Enterprises. Used cartridges can also be found if you look for them. The Club Store has them sometimes. Another good source may be your local thrift store; at prices around a dollar or so, these cartridges are like finding gold nuggets!

Christmas Potluck -- Biggest Club Event Ever!

Who would ever believe that 46 folks would show up for the Club's Christmas Potluck? I didn't know we had that many people in the area that were interested in our "obsolete" computer! Boy, was I wrong.

Our social director, Helen Fry did a wonderful job of pulling this together. The food was just great and Santa arrived with gifts for all. Santa said that he'd never seen so much water since he was here last year!

Phil and I both would like to thank Helen and the rest of the club for our "special" gifts they presented us. We would like to say that it is each and every one of you who really makes the Club "special." What a great bunch all of us are!

Target Diskette May Be *What*?

Although it should happen very infrequently, when using the DISKCOPY procedure to copy diskettes, you may get beeps from your PCjr and a message saying

"Unrecoverable read (or write, or verify) error"

(and finally, when DISKCOPY stops you will read:)

"Target diskette may be unusable."

In our experience, this copy may actually be usable. But to be sure, it is better to try DISKCOPY again with another target diskette if the messages you got during the first DISKCOPY procedure were "write errors."

If the messages were "read errors," then simply try again with the same diskette just in case it was a quirk -- you know, one of those un-explainable things that might not have really happened. Sometimes, the copy will be made without a hitch on the second try.

If you continue to get read errors you might have a problem on your source diskette. Or, it could be your disk drive. Many times, cleaning the drive heads will solve your pro-blem. And, drives that need lubricating can produce read errors. So, if your drive is particularly noisy (which means noisier than the usually noisy PCjr drive), you should try lubricating the drive. This is a simple pro-cedure which we have explained in past issues. But, if you have missed them, send us a note and we'll mail you a copy, or bring in your Junior for Spring Cleaning in April. . .or, we'll reprint the article in the May issue.

Adding Words to *Writing Assistant's* Dictionary

Phil Janz and Louie Levy

There are several ways to add words to *Writing Assistant's* dictionary. When the program finds a word that isn't in its dictionary, it stops during spell check, highlights the suspect word and displays a menu giving you several choices. If the word is correctly spelled and you wish to add it to your dictionary, selection options 3 or 4 will add the word.

Unfortunately, using this method to add words to the dictionary isn't ideal.

If you are like many Junior users, you have added memory to your computer and now run *Writing Assistant* in a RAM drive, or in memory. If you do, adding words to the dictionary in the above manner only adds them to the dictionary that is in memory. This

dictionary, like all the files in your RAM drive, disappear when the computer is turned off. The next time you use *Writing Assistant*, you will add the words all over again, only to lose them when you power down.

If you are a 128K *Writing Assistant* user, when you save new words to the dictionary with the option 3 or 4 listed in the first paragraph, the words are actually being saved to your dictionary. The problem here is that the new words are being saved in chrono-logical order and not in alphabetical order. This isn't a problem for a few words, but over time, *Writing Assistant* will take longer and longer to find these words in the dictionary.

What we suggest is that you make a list of words you wish to add to your dictionary. While you key in your work, jot them down on a note pad next to Junior. Then, when the list gets fairly long, do the following:

1. Start *Writing Assistant* from the A> by keying in WRITE with the *Writing Assistant* disk in your A Drive.

2. Choose Define Page from the Main Menu and set the values as follows:
Left Margin = 1
Right Margin = 78
Top Margin = 0
Bottom Margin = 0
Page Length = 0

3. Press the Enter key to change margins.

4. Press and hold the Shift key and press F5 (Append). When the Append prompt appears, type WORDPRF.ADL and press the Enter key.

5. You can now edit your personal dictionary just as you would any *Writing Assistant* document. We highly suggest that you enter the words into your dictionary alphabetically. Doing so will avoid duplications and will speed up your spell checks. Also, adding a list of words at one time may help keep the file more

contiguous, avoiding over-writes to your main *Writing Assistant* diskette.

6. When you have finished editing the dictionary, press Esc to return to the Main Menu.

7. Select menu item 3. PRINT and press the Enter key.

8. Remove the write protect tab from the main *Writing Assistant* diskette in drive A.

9. From the PRINT MENU, specify PRINT TO: WORDPRF.ADL and press Enter. The caution screen will appear telling you that the file WORDPRF.ADL will be overwritten. Press Enter.

10. After the Main Menu appears, press 9. EXIT and exit from *Writing Assistant*. You will again get the caution screen that the working copy has not been saved. Exit anyway.

11. Remove the diskette and replace the write protect tab.

The next time you start *Writing Assistant*, either from the A> or by loading it into RAM, it will use the new copy of the dictionary. If you have any problems with this, call the HELP number for *Writing Assistant*, e-mail us or drop us a line and we will help.

Tips to Improve the Newsletter

Unknown

One member who wants to remain anonymous has come up with what he feels is a way to improve our newsletter. Well, maybe not improve it, but to make it larger. After reading other newsletters from the Club Archives, he suggests the following improvement be made.

We should use one page to tell our members when our last meeting took place and where the next will be. We need to say more about what we did and what we are going to do.

On another page, we could list the phone numbers of local BBS in Lane County. List all their phone numbers, mailing addresses and what type of clientele they lean toward.

Also, we should tell a little about the newsletter. You know, what program we use to make it, what brand of glue-sticks we use for paste-up and what type Xerox (umm) machine we use to make the camera-ready copy. Also, we could give the location of 18th Avenue Copy and Print, where we get the newsletter printed.

We could tell everyone that it's okey to reprint any of the stuff that's in the newsletter (as if someone would want to). This member said that we should say to anyone who actually reprints an article that whoever wrote it first should get the credit. Most of the folks who originally wrote our articles have long ago passed away from old age!

Another page could be used to tell what went on at the last Board Meeting. (We did that. . .back in October of 1995 at our last Board Meeting. But, I guess I could reprint it.) Also, we could let the newsletter editor have a half-page. Ummm, I don't think that's a good idea!

We could print a listing of members whose dues are due and a listing of those who just renewed. Also, the last page could be used as a membership application. We could make it a self-addressed form! If we combined with a listing of all the disks in the software library, it could double as an order blank.

All great ideas! I just wish there was room for all of these great improvements for our newsletter.

This member also said that he heard that one in every four people in America has mental problems. So, if you look at three of your friends and think they're alright, you need to get some help for yourself.

DOS's FORMAT Command

Have you noticed that it is very difficult to find diskettes for our Juniors? New boxes of double-sided, double-density disks are getting scarce.

When we purchase a new box of diskettes from a store, they usually haven't been formatted for use in our Juniors. Unlike those from the Club's Store that have been already preformatted, these disks are just circles of plastic coated with a magnetic material and encased in plastic shield. I'm not too sure that we can even say they're blank; they have not actually been prepared to receive and store information for us yet. To do this, they first need to be *formatted*.

This formatting process does several things. It divides the diskette into sections called, naturally, sectors. It can prepare room for the operating system if we so choose, and it makes both sides of the diskette available for DOS to use. It also may give the disk a label if we chose to name it.

It is this formatting procedure that makes the disk blank and ready for our use. Formatting will make any disk, not only new ones, into blank disks, ready for our use.

If you format a diskette that has programs or data files on it, it will become a blank disk; all the information that was previously on the disk will be lost during the formatting process. Some of the more recent DOS format programs do have the capacity to do a "safe" format, but Junior owners normally use DOS 2.1's FORMAT command, and this program completely, and irrevocably, formats a disk.

Because the format command will prepare any 5 ¼ inch diskette except those that have been previously formatted into a high density format, it is tempting to purchase used disks from sources such as thrift stores or computer fairs and then reformat them. Sometimes this is safe, but make sure the disks are not dirty or so used that the surfaces may no longer be dependable. Diskettes are so inexpensive that used disks may not be the bargain you

think; they may spell disaster for your important data!

To format a diskette, place your copy of DOS in your disk drive and close the latch. At the A>, key in
        FORMAT B:
This will tell DOS that you want to execute the format command to format a diskette in the B disk drive.

Once you press the enter key, COMMAND.COM, DOS's command interpreter, will read the command you keyed in and execute the FORMAT command. It will see that you wish to format a diskette that you will place in the B: drive. Junior will then display the following:
        "Insert new diskette for drive B:
        and strike any key when ready."
On a one-drive Junior, this is the signal to you to remove the DOS diskette and place the diskette you want to format into the drive. If you have a Junior with two drives, you would place the diskette into the B: drive.

Pressing that famous "anykey" gets the operation going and you will see the message Formatting. . . on your screen. The diskette will be partitioned into sectors and space for a directory listing on the disk will be made.

When FORMAT.COM is finished, it will let you know by displaying a message
    "Format complete, 362496 bytes total disk
    space, 362496 bytes free."
        If DOS has a problem formatting this diskette, it will let you know; DOS is famous for telling us what's wrong! If you get the message
    "Format complete, 179712 bytes total disk
    space, 179712 bytes available on disk"
it means that the diskette was formatted as a single-sided diskette.

Sometimes, especially when formatting used disks, you may get something like this:
    "Format complete, 362496 bytes total disk
    space, 10240 bytes in bad sectors, 352256
    bytes available on disk"
This means that there were a couple of sectors

that, because of damage or some other reason, DOS couldn't format them. Not to worry as these unreliable sectors have been "locked out" and DOS won't try to copy or write any data to them.

You will also be asked if you would like to format another (Y/N). Just press either Y or N for your choice.

There you have it for a simple format of a new diskette, or a reformat of a used one. But, if you need to make a diskette a bootable diskette, the proceedure is a little different.

To make a bootable diskette, one that will "boot" Junior on startup, you must format a diskette and then put a copy of DOS's "operating system" on it. So, to accomplish this, key in

FORMAT B: /S

Here, we are telling DOS that we want to execute the Format command to format the diskette in the B: drive and by using the /S parameter, we tell DOS that we want to transfer the "system files" to this diskette.

This time, when the the diskette is finished being formatted, you will get this message:

Format complete, System transferred
362496 bytes total disk space
 40960 bytes used by system
321536 bytes available on disk
Format another (Y/N)?

You will notice that when you do a directory listing of this new disk, it will have the file COMMAND.COM in the directory. In fact, if you do a Control/Alt/Delete, Junior will boot; you just made a self-booting disk.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about the FORMAT command is that you should ALWAYS specify the disk drive. Never, never use the command FORMAT alone and press the enter key. Use FORMAT A: or FORMAT B: Someday, you may own another computer, one with a hard drive, and you don't want to make a fatal error and format the hard drive; especially if you are using a friend's computer!

A Letter from Down South

(We received the following letter from member Clyde Dodge of Mountain View, California and thank him for his permission to use it here.)

"I found a PCjr keyboard at my favorite surplus shop so I paid the $5 and brought it home. I replaced my dirty old keyboard with this new one.

"I decided to experiment with my old keyboard. It was SOOOOO dirty on the sides of the keys from ten years' worth of grimy fingers. I removed the batteries and the six screws on the back. Lifting the base exposed the circuit board that has the two IR lamps and the socket for the keyboard cable. Removing the circuit board exposed the underside of the rubbery mat that provides the key return pressure. I removed that and it had lots of crumbs and hair and dirt on the up side. I washed the mat in the sink with a scrub brush and dried it.

"Then I picked up the rest of the keyboard, noting that the return key and the space bar are loose, but nothing else would come loose. I put this plastic part in the dishwasher and ran it with the loaded dishes. When it was finished and on the drying cycle I took the keyboard out. The space bar had come loose so I had to figure out how to get it back in place.

"The board and all the keys are now clean as a whistle. I anticipate no problems in putting it back together, as I did that once just to test the procedure before I washed it. I expect one could use a couple of rubber bands to keep the space bar and the return key in place.

"Apparently the water is so hot in the dishwasher that it melted the glue that holds the PCjr identity tag in place, but re-gluing that is hardly a problem. It looks as though they used a double-sided sticky tape to hold it in place, and the washing cycle ruined that tape.

"As a side note, the rubbery pressure pad is molded to fit into the backs of the keys.

It looks as though one could get the molded part back into the backs of the keys with the eraser end of a pencil, but it didn't appear to be necessary to do this, I just laid the pad in place (there are three index pins) and tested the action of the keys and found no detectable difference caused by not doing this.

"So now I have two keyboards.

1996 Saying "Goodby" to Junior.

1997 is going to be a GREAT year for you and your Junior. . .if you belong to the club!!

IF YOU NEED HELP BEFORE
THE NEXT MEETING. . .

Give These Club Members a Call:

BASIC. . . .   Paul Bonney - 344-1501
WordStar . .   Paul Bonney - 344-1501
PC-File III . . . Louie Levy - 3437692
PC-File +, 5 or 6:
             Dick Page - 342-3193
WordPerfect . .Louie Levy - 343-7592
             Mike Ruiz - 687-8361
Writing Assistant.Phil Janz - 343-1059
Name Pal . . . . . Phil Janz - 343-1059
Communications:
     Gordon LeManquais - 746-1594
             Mike Ruiz - 687-8361
Hardware Problems:
          Dick Page - 342-3193
          Louie Levy - 343-7592
Spreadsheets. . . Mike Ruiz - 687-8361
Workshop Sign-up, Parts and supplies:
The Company Store-Phil Janz:
             343-1059