

Developers' Newsletter

No 30

October 1993

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General News

Circulating this newsletter

It is vital that your colleagues see Developer Newsletters. Please ensure that you copy/circulate each newsletter to them, especially to your programmers and hardware designers.

Acorn House

The move to Acorn House was most successful and has, as expected assisted us in providing support to you. We are, however, still receiving mail, from Developers, which has been redirected from our previous premises. Please try to remember to use our new address which is as follows:

Acorn Computers Ltd
Acorn House
Vision Park
Histon
CAMBRIDGE
CB4 4AE

Telephone and fax numbers for Developer Support are Tel: 0223 254248 Fax: 0223 254264.

Developers with email access should direct their mail to ISVQuery@acorn.co.uk as previously.

Telephones

Some developers have become concerned when they have called the Developer Support number (0223 254248) and received a recorded message from the Voice Messaging System. Please note that this is not an attempt to avoid talking to you! Occasionally, all relevant members of the support team will be busy answering other callers or be away from the desk. By leaving a message on the Messaging System, we will be able to get back to you rapidly. We do monitor messages coming in very frequently and always answer the phone directly whenever possible.

Please also note that some developers are not using the Developer Support direct dial number but are calling in on the main Acorn number (0223 254254). Using this main number will delay routing your call and unless you announce yourself as a Registered Developer, you may not be routed to the most suitable person

Please do make use of the message-leaving facilities available under our telephone system. You are not restricted for space in the same way as on telephone answering machines so do try to give some indication of your reason for calling so that we can research the answer before calling you back. We would be grateful, nevertheless, if you could continue to send complex technical queries by fax, letter, disc or email thus reducing the possibility of us introducing errors through mishearing your question.

Developer prices and purchases

A new issue (October 1993) of the Developer price list is enclosed. This list takes effect forthwith.

We would be grateful if you would bear in mind the following when planning your needs:

Developer Support offers discount prices as a special service to Developers. We cannot offer the sort of sales service a good dealer can offer. In order for us to offer the discounts we have to ask that orders are accompanied by the appropriate payment. We cannot promise specific delivery times and/or dates and arrangements.

Press releases

Before issuing Press Releases quoting Acorn sources, we would be grateful if you would first check with us that you are at liberty to do so. If in doubt, contact Developer Support. We will endeavour to put you in touch with the appropriate person in each case.

RISC OS 3.10 EPROMs

We believe that there are some Developers who still have the 3.10 EPROM version of RISC OS 3. If you are one of those, please contact us. We will send you ROMs to replace them and would be grateful to receive the EPROMs in return.

Videos

You have probably seen Acorn's advertising in the National Press and elsewhere inviting potential customers to request a video entitled 'The Computer Minefield'. If you would like a copy of the video, please contact Developer Support and we will send you one.

Marketing News

Acorn World Show

There are still a few spaces left at Acorn World Show for exhibitors. If you wish to attend as an exhibitor, please

contact Stephen Bozdan at EPS (tel: 0295 788386; fax: 0295 788644). Even if you don't have a stand, do try to visit the show if you can. We look forward to meeting you there.

Technical News

RISC OS Style Guide

The new version of the Style Guide, Release 2, is enclosed with this newsletter. Please read it and make every effort to comply. Our customers frequently and consistently ask us to encourage you to provide a common look and feel to applications. If you need extra copies of the Style Guide, please order in the normal way. The Style Guide is on the Developers' Price List at £7.86.

Wimplot size

You will already be aware that, over the years, Archimedes series machines have had a range of default memory page sizes depending upon the amount of RAM fitted. The page size has been 8K, 16K and 32K and it has been necessary for developers to take account of these varying increments when choosing a Wimplot size in program Boot files. Future machines may also support a 4K page size and developers should be aware of this when setting Wimplot size. Please do not assume that the machine you are developing on is a 'standard' size. Always take account of the actual Wimplot that will be allocated on any particular machine, with 4K producing the most critical rounding from the Wimplot value requested.

CDFS

An update for CDFS to version 2.20 is planned for release as an EPROM upgrade in late autumn. Licencees of the current version 2.13 will be mailed with 2.20 to distribute with their SCSI cards - probably in late October. If you do have a licence to ship CDFS with your product and have not received the update by week ending 5 November, please contact us; it may have gone astray. The CDFS software has been substantially re-written with various detailed improvements. These include making CD-ROM driver support modular so that new drives (and their drivers) can be added without changing the ROM. Version 2.20 is also Photo-CD ready but the full software support for Photo-CD will be later.

MIDI

Acorn has now been allocated a MIDI System Exclusive Message ID from the European range of numbers. It is '00 20 27' in hex. It supercedes the previous number from the USA number range allocated in error by the MIDI Manufacturers Association. Anyone wishing to make use of this ID with MIDI equipment or software should contact Developer Support. We can then arrange for a sub-ID to be allocated and discuss the format of the SYSEX ID.

Multimedia Expansion Unit

Please note that further information has been given to us relating to upgrading the MEU. You can NOT draw the 'spare' power from any rail of the PSU, but only from the +5V rail.

An amendment to the MEU manual will read:

IMPORTANT

Please read before use

Acorn Multimedia Expansion Unit User Guide - Erratum

Contrary to the advice given on Pages 34 and 69 of this Guide the PSU fitted to this M.E.U. may not be capable of supporting one additional device.

Although the 'Continuous power available' and 'Surge power available' figures given on Page 69 are correct (at 12W and 19W respectively) the additional power may ONLY be drawn from the 5V rail and NOT from the 12V rail.

All upgrades to the Multimedia Expansion Unit (MEU) must be undertaken by Acorn's authorised agent who will ensure that the upgrade required does not exceed specifications.

Bug fixes in FPE version 4.02 following first Release

1. Comparisons of normal extended precision infinities with single, double or anomalous extended precision infinities of the same sign didn't produce an "equal" result.
2. POW(x,y) was producing an answer near 2, not 1, when x was very large and y was very small. Tracked down to an error in calculating EXP(x) for very small values of x (specifically, for $x < 2^{-66}$).

Version 4.02 of the FPE software will shortly be shipped with the FPA10 product. Please ask for a software update if you have the earlier version (4.00).

Bit-mapped fonts

Please note that, in future releases of RISC OS, there will not be support for bit-mapped fonts, but only for outline fonts. Please review any products you have that rely on bit-mapped fonts and make the necessary changes now to prepare the installed base of application software for future operating systems.

Printer Port Dongles

As Acorn and other computer manufacturers explore the possibilities of portable computers, it becomes increasingly apparent that small size is important to customers. As machines become smaller, so does the space available for connectors to external devices such as printers. Developers who use Printer Port Dongles for protection (which is not a method advised by Acorn) should be aware that it is likely that any future portable computer from Acorn may not have the current (full-size) printer port connectors fitted but may carry 26 or 36 way miniature types

News from non Acorn sources

Multiple Serial Port Expansion cards

Several Developers, recently, have asked about cards with multiple serial ports. In addition to cards listed in the Product Directory, ASHIV, our French distributor, have developed an 8-port card. They have not yet negotiated

distribution in the UK but, if you need such a card you may like to contact them as well as UK Developers when assessing which card will best suit your needs. ASHIV's contact numbers are:

Tel: 010 33 1 48 58 70 77
Fax: 010 33 1 48 58 20 09

In addition, or alternatively, you may wish to contact AFE Ltd in Hong Kong who have developed a similar product.

Tel: 010 852 8511200
Fax: 010 852 8514555

From P.R.E.S. Ltd

'Micro-Trader' offer to registered Developers

'Micro-Trader' Business System

'Micro-Trader' is a fully RISC OS compliant business accounts system comprising Sales Ledger, Purchase Ledger, Nominal Ledger and Stock Control. The ledgers are fully integrated and offer the highest standard of professional accounts. The entry of information is quick and easy and the essential financial information that is required to run a business is provided instantly. The program facilities are flexible to the needs of the user including a user-defined invoice layout that allows several

different invoice layouts to be defined for different types of jobs. The Mailer module provides mail-merging and label runs and contains a stand alone database. The 350-page manual includes a guide to all the normal business transactions.

P.R.E.S. Ltd offers Registered Developers the complete 'Micro-Trader' Business System for half price at £139.50 + VAT. This will include a free Mailer module (complete retail price normally £328.95 + VAT).

Please contact P.R.E.S. Ltd (Tel 0276 472046 Fax 0276 451427) for more information and a free demo disc.

Greyhound Marketing

Greyhound Marketing Ltd, distributor for third-party Archimedes products for the UK and Germany, is about to launch a hardware upgrade path for A3000 series computers as their first venture in joint development projects for the Acorn computer range. Greyhound Marketing are always looking for new ideas from developers (contact Greyhound for details of their current full range). Funding and support services are usually available for joint product development. For Software Developers, advice about potential sales, product exposure and general marketing in the Acorn environment is available.

Greyhound Marketing Ltd can be contacted by telephone on 0532 621111, or by fax on 0532 374163.

Enclosures:

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This newsletter was produced using EasiWriter from Icon Technology