

Developers' Newsletter No 38

August 1995

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this newsletter is true and correct at the time of printing. Products described in this newsletter, however, are subject to continuous development and improvements and Acorn Computers Ltd and other contributors reserve the right to change their specifications at any time. Acorn Computers Ltd cannot accept liability for any loss or damage arising from the use of any information or particulars in this newsletter.

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General News

Extending the range

You should have received in mid-July details of Acorn's six new 32-bit computers, extending the successful Risc PC and A-series ranges. The new Risc PC models, together with the A7000 computer in different configurations, have increased memory, multimedia and networking capabilities at reduced prices. The Acorn range now includes a second generation Risc PC 600, two new Risc PC 700 models and three different configurations of the new A7000, all available with optional low cost CD-ROM drives.

In addition there was information relating to Acorn's recognition and response to the changing educational market in introducing the new product line-up as well as an aggressive new pricing structure and improved channel and distribution strategy. Educational purchasers will be able to buy Acorn computers at a 'recommended education price' (REP). The Acorn desktop range, which starts with the A3010 from £299 inc VAT, includes the A3020 at £449 and the A4000 at £599, now features the new A7000 starting from £749, with the award-winning Risc PC available for the first time for under £1000.

Acorn has also introduced a new channel structure of specialist Acorn Authorised Education Agents who will represent Acorn at a local level to provide schools with the value-added service and support they require. Acorn will supply educational establishments directly, taking orders from the new Agents or from schools. Consumer, enthusiast, international and professional customers will still be supported by existing channels with take-up of the new product range also expected to be strong in these markets.

New Managing Director at Acorn

David Lee has been appointed Managing Director of Acorn Computer Group and Managing Director of Acorn Computers Limited with immediate effect. He joins the Acorn Group from Olivetti UK Limited where he was Director of Finance and Administration for a number of years. His appointment follows the resignation of Sam Wauchope. David Lee's appointment confirms the Group's commitment to moving the business forward through continued technical innovation and development coupled with new customer and market initiatives.

Commenting on this appointment, Marco De Benedetti, Chief Operating Officer of Olivetti Telemedia, said: "Acorn must develop its business if it is to continue to thrive in a very competitive, changing market. Acorn has demonstrated throughout its history that it is able to do this. The strategy set for Acorn is therefore continuing. Throughout the 14 years he was with Olivetti, David has made an outstanding contribution. I am delighted that he is taking on this new role."

David Lee said: "Taking the helm of one of the world's leading brands in information technology for education is an exciting challenge. Continuing the expansion of the Group's activities through Online Media and through our associate company Advanced RISC Machines is also a great opportunity. Acorn has a really talented team of people and one of my first priorities will be to work with them to identify and implement new initiatives to ensure

the long-term success of the business."

A chartered accountant, David Lee has pursued a financial career in industry for over 25 years, 20 of which have been spent in the IT sector. During his time at Olivetti, which he joined in 1981, he was instrumental in establishing the company's in-house staff development programme, for which it was awarded 'Investors in People' status. Prior to joining Olivetti, he held senior financial positions with ITT and Hepworth plc. He is 52 years old and married with two children.

Additional Newsletters

From time-to-time Developers have asked about receiving additional copies of Developers' Newsletters to be sent to different sites/people. This is not possible within the support covered by a single Developer subscription.

We have discussed this very real requirement, however, to provide information to members of a Registered Developer's staff who are not located at the normal Developer address. We would be prepared to send out additional copies of newsletter(s) to address(es) nominated by a Developer for a fee of £20 plus VAT per annum per address to cover the costs of production and mailing. This mailing would not necessarily be concurrent with the main mailing but would follow within a few days of it. Other communications would normally be sent to the main address only.

If you would like to avail yourself of this service, please provide all the relevant contact and address details and send them with payment for £10 plus VAT for each addressee to cover the remainder of 1995. Cheques should be made payable to Acorn Computers Ltd as usual. A copy of this newsletter will then be sent to the nominated person/address.

ARM 710 Upgrades

The ARM 710 upgrade is available from Acorn Direct (13 Denington Road, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 2RL Tel: 01933 228953). You should apply for the upgrade to Acorn Direct and enclose payment of £146.88 (inc VAT). Once you receive your upgrade you can use the packaging to return your old card to Acorn Direct. You will then receive a cheque for £29.38. There is no special price for Developers. All enquiries about the purchase of the upgrade should be addressed to Acorn Direct.

ftp site

The Acorn ftp server now has a /pub/riscos/thirdparty hierarchy, which currently contains archives of data from Media Design Interactive (an upgrade to allow their early CD-ROMs to be accessed from Risc PC) and the new X11R6 fonts from Gnome for IX. If any other Registered Developers have updates which you wish to make available over the net, we now have a mechanism to do it.

If you have Internet access yourself, you may submit your distribution for upload by connecting to ftp.acorn.co.uk, changing directory to /incoming and using put (in binary mode) from your ftp client to transfer the software to us. You should then send email to sysadmin@acorn.co.uk, with details of the location, filename and nature of the upload. Please be sure to state that your intention is for the software to be made publicly available on ftp.acorn. If you

do not have Internet access, please send your distribution by post to Developer Support in the normal way.

Product Directory

The electronic version of Issue 7 of the Education Product Directory (without amendment, i.e. any errors we - or you - may have made and which appear in Issue 7, will remain in the current electronic version) has been uploaded onto the ftp site. We are trying hard to incorporate all the amendments and new information you have sent. Once we have done so, we hope to upload a new version. This will take some months so please bear with us.

Please keep sending us your updates. The appropriate forms were sent to you on Developers' discs 36 (Product information form - for new product entries) and 37 (Directory response form - for general info on amendments) and are included again on Developers' Disc 38 enclosed with this newsletter.

World Wide Web

Acorn's WWW server (site) has been up and running since 19 June. We assume most Developers will be aware of the very rapid development of the WWW as part of the Internet and Acorn has finally managed to be part of this tremendous new information network. This server is in addition to the existing Acorn FTP site.

The HTML language used for WWW use is a continuously developing standard and Acorn has had to make some decisions at this time with regard to the particular version, and hence features, supported. The WWW site will in general support HTML 2.0 and occasionally may use features beyond this as used in products such as Netscape for other platforms. WWW Browsers available for the Acorn platform support varying levels of the HTML standard; the forthcoming browser for Intertalk will initially support HTML 2.0 with possibly a few extensions.

If you have any suggestions for additions to information supported on the Acorn WWW site, including perhaps some of your own, please contact Developer Support. Please bear in mind the costs of generating and updating the information in HTML format in making any specific suggestions.

Some Developers have asked about a Registered Developer area on Acorn's World Wide Web site. This is something we're considering for the future. Currently, however, you're keeping us so busy responding to your queries that we haven't the time to manage such a service properly. We're also conscious that, while more and more Developers are joining the Internet, the majority of you don't yet have access. Do please keep us informed of your email addresses as you join the Internet. Email is certainly an efficient way of sending your technical queries since you don't have to restrict yourself to office hours but currently fewer than one third of Registered Developers have sent us their email addresses.

New price list

Please note that besides the addition of new products to the price list, some of Acorn's prices have changed. A revised Developers' Discount Price List is enclosed. It supersedes all previous Developers' Price Lists. We would be grateful

if you would use the August 1995 list for any future orders.

Developers' orders

Please remember to use the Developers' Order form as provided on Developers' Disc 37 and again on Developers' Disc 38 which is enclosed with this newsletter. Please also ensure that the delivery address and all other details including those on the cheque enclosed in payment are correct. Our warehouse frequently has to contact Developer Support because carriers have been unable to deliver goods to the address provided on the order form. This inevitably delays delivery while we contact you.

Risc PC 486 Card

The Acorn Risc PC 486 Card has been successfully launched with favourable reviews in the press and a high level of sales demand. More than 10,000 Risc PC 486 Cards have already been supplied to customers since the product became available in April.

Since the level of uptake has been both higher and more rapid than Acorn had anticipated, and sales of Risc PC continue to be strong, demand for the Risc PC 486 Card has outstripped supply and further stocks of the Risc PC 486 Card are being manufactured. Unfortunately, owing to component supply difficulties, the availability of the card has been delayed from August until the second half of September.

In order to ensure that no existing customers miss out on the opportunity to benefit from the £99 (+VAT) price, normally available only at the time of purchase of Risc PC, any orders received before August 31st will still be charged at the £99 price. Please be aware that there is no additional Developer discount for this product which may, nonetheless, be ordered through Developer Support in the normal way.

New Acorn Products

Acorn SchoolServer

Acorn SchoolServer is a high-performance file server platform to address 'whole site' networking requirements and the integration of other platforms with Acorn's computer products. Windows NT Server is pre-installed on every Acorn SchoolServer which is a Power PC and uses industry standard Ethernet technology. A 25-user licence is included and further 25-user licences are available. Acorn SchoolServer is supplied with or without OmniClient software and works in conjunction with other products from the AUN range.

OmniClient

OmniClient is a universal RISC OS client for use in connecting Acorn platforms to solutions such as NT Server and NFS. This is achieved by means of software that is loaded onto the RISC OS client end and performs all of the necessary tasks to enable the storage of RISC OS based information on servers which use an alternative operating systems. OmniClient requires RISC OS 3.1 and 2MB main RAM. It uses industry standard Ethernet technology and does not require the presence of a local Hard Disc. The price is as follows:

AES65 OmniClient (site licence) RRP: £249.00 plus VAT

InterTalk

InterTalk allows RISC OS Users access to electronic mail internally within their local area Ethernet network and externally via the Internet. It is easy to use and administer, allows bulletin boards to be set up and accessed, is cost-effective and enables email connectivity with PC and Macintosh computers. InterTalk requires RISC OS 3.1 and at least 2MB of main memory. Prices are as follows:

AES70 InterTalk (Single User) RRP: £79.00 plus VAT
AES71 InterTalk (Site Licence) RRP: £299.00 plus VAT

Leaflets describing Acorn SchoolServer, OmniClient and InterTalk are available on request. Both OmniClient and InterTalk are included on the enclosed Developers' Discount Price List.

RISC OS 2

Now that around 80% of users have RISC OS 3.1 (or a later version), there should be no need for Developers to support earlier versions of the operating system. Developer Support will, therefore, withdraw support for Developers in connection with RISC OS 2 and RISC OS 3.00 so that we can focus on support for RISC OS 3.1 and later versions and thus on the needs of the majority of customers.

RISC OS 3.1 Upgrades

Acorn's Product Marketing Group has responded to pressure from Developers and others to make RISC OS 3.1 upgrades available in a different way. The single user software upgrade pack (one set of ROMs, discs and manuals) is being phased out. RISC OS 3.1 ROMs are now available in packs of three sets and packs of ten sets. A pack containing a single set of user manuals and discs is available separately. All have been included on the Developers' price list. Developers may, if they wish, purchase sets of ROMs to split up and sell on with their own products. They should acknowledge Acorn's copyright in so doing. Any Developer requiring a set of ROMs to upgrade his own machine now that he need no longer support RISC OS 2, may purchase a set from Developer Support. See page three of the Developers' Discount Price List.

PRM Offer

We have become increasingly aware over recent months that there are Registered Developers who do not have a copy of the RISC OS 3 Programmer's Reference Manual to hand. These volumes provide much information for programmers and we do, as stated in earlier newsletters, simply refer to PRM page numbers if the information a Developer requested can be found therein.

As a means to encourage those remaining Developers to provide themselves with the Manuals, we are pleased to announce a Special Offer for Developers, as follows:

AKJ03/ACJ05 RISC OS 3 PRM & Risc PC PRM vol 5 £40
The offer includes an additional RISC OS 3 Style Guide (AKJ21) and a copy of the Technical Publications Style Guide (AKJ17).

A Special Offer order form is enclosed.

Ease-of-use

Research with teachers, both primary and secondary (including independent schools) highlights the ever-growing need for intuitive, easy-to-use software for children and teachers alike. If they are to make the best use of software, it should follow standard procedures for common operations. We urge you, therefore, to follow closely the RISC OS 3 Style Guide, a copy of which has been provided to each Registered Developer. This may not cover every situation but it does provide a good foundation.

Acorn Customer Services

Developers sometimes ask to whom at Acorn they should refer Customers who ask about Acorn-related things rather than the Developer's own software. I have talked to Customer Services about this and trust that the following helps you to answer such questions from your customers.

Customers' queries should in the first instance be addressed to the supplier of their equipment. If he/she is unable to help, the Customer should contact Acorn Customer Services, in writing, providing full details of the assistance required and of the steps taken to date. Contact details are as follows:

*Postal address: Customer Services, Acorn Computers Ltd,
Acorn House, Vision Park, Histon, Cambridge, CB4 4AE
Customer Services fax number: 01223 254529
Email address: Customer.services@acorn.co.uk*

Acorn Pocket Book

The Acorn Pocket Book (order code AHB03) was the first model in the Pocket Book range, launched in September 1992. It has proved a great success, particularly in education, and was the star performer in the national NCET portable trials for schools that ended in March 1994.

Acorn launched Pocket Book II in September 1994, with a larger screen and more resident software than the original Pocket Book, and this has resulted in an increased level of sales across the complete Pocket Book range.

In 1995, sales of the original Pocket Book have dwindled as more and more customers have preferred the more powerful Pocket Book II models, and for this reason Acorn has discontinued the AHB03 Pocket Book and the range has now been extended to include a 1MB Pocket Book II (See the Developers' Price List for price details).

Existing owners of the AHB03 Pocket Book will still be able to obtain Pocket Book hardware peripherals, since these are compatible across the Pocket Book range. They will also be able to obtain the software upgrades for the original Pocket Book (now included in Pocket Book II as standard) while stocks last, and Acorn has reduced the prices of these as follows (Prices given are RRP exclusive of VAT):

AHA42 Acorn Schedule: diary, timetable and planner £12.75
AHA44 Acorn Plotter: plots functions, like a graphical calculator £16.98
AHA41 OPL Editor: programming language, similar to BASIC £21.23

Class packs of Schedule and Plotter are also available:

Schedule Class Pack	(11 Schedules)	£127.50 + VAT
Plotter Class Pack	(11 Plotters)	£169.79 + VAT

Contact your Acorn supplier for further details. There are no additional Developer discounts on these products.

Developer subscriptions

Subscriptions for Registered Developers have been pegged now for two years despite rising costs. Please be advised that the rates will increase from 1st January 1996 for existing Developers and from 1st September for newly Registered Developers whose initial subscription will carry them through to January 1997.

Technical News

Timer 1 and TimeCode support

We are currently implementing a TimeCode support module which provides the RISC OS developer with access to timecode formats (Red Book audio, SMPTE and MIDI Time Code) which adhere to international standards in the film, television and music industries. The TimeCode module will allow developers to produce applications which can sense, synchronise with and control the creation and display of text, video, audio, animations, special effects and other system events across several applications at any given time. In addition, timecode-aware devices such as synthesisers, broadcast-quality video recorders and CD-ROM drives can also be synchronised and controlled.

Details of the TimeCode interface will soon be available to Registered Developers and can be obtained on request from Developer Support. We would like to hear from application developers who would be interested in using the TimeCode module, and recommend that all applications which can render time based data should be updated to be TimeCode compliant.

We would also like to hear from all developers who are using IOC/IOMD Timer 1 in their products, especially if these products run within the desktop, as the TimeCode module will in future exercise control over this timer. The TimeCode module can supply Timer1 scheduling facilities for displaced Timer1 clients.

Acorn Replay will become TimeCode compliant and will no longer rely upon Timer1 to provide scheduling facilities.

Ticker events - error corrected in RISC OS 3.5

Ticker events are not delivered at 100Hz (as documented) in RISC OS up to 3.1. They are actually slightly out i.e. ~100.01Hz. Please be aware that this was noticed and corrected in 3.5.

RISC OS 3.6

Developers who attended the meeting on 23rd March about developments to RISC OS have already been offered the opportunity to obtain a soft-loadable version of RISC OS 3.6. This version provides about 90% of the functionality

Dorling Kindersley CD-ROMs for RISC OS

We are pleased to be able to tell you that in the autumn the first Dorling Kindersley CD-ROM for the Acorn platform will be available. It will be aimed at the primary/early years age-group.

This is good news for Acorn CD-ROM Developers. Dorling Kindersley books are already very popular in UK schools and to date the CD-ROMs have been Mac and PC only. The addition of the Dorling Kindersley range into the Acorn marketplace should encourage primary schools to purchase CD-ROM drives for their Acorn computer platforms and give you more customers for your own CD-ROMs many of which offer schools innovative software of a type not available on other platforms.

of RISC OS 3.6 itself. Other Registered Developers who would like to purchase a copy should contact Developer Support for an order form. You will need a Risc PC 600 with RISC OS 3.5, 13MB RAM and 25MB Free Hard Disc space. This version is not intended to be shown publicly and is provided to Developers for testing purposes.

No ROM upgrade from RISC OS 3.5 to RISC OS 3.6 is currently planned.

!Printers

Development of Acorn's printer drivers is a continuing process. The most recent version, 1.28c, provides a considerable improvement for RISC OS 3.1 users and some improvement for RISC OS 3.5 users. If Developers would like a copy, it can be downloaded from the ftp server. If you do not have access to ftp but require !Printers 1.28c, contact Developer Support and we will send you a copy. In the autumn, we expect to release another version with further improvements to colour rendition and speed.

CDFS

We have written to Developers licensed to distribute CDFS, to known Developers of CD-ROM software (as a courtesy) and to some others who we felt might be affected to let them know that Acorn is planning to replace all CD-related components of RISC OS in the next release. These include CDFSFile, CDFS and CDFSDriver. The purpose of this work is to improve the architecture and performance of the system and to make it easier to develop drivers to support new CD-ROM devices.

The high-level filing system interface (defined by FileSwitch) will remain unchanged, but all other interfaces are likely to be different; these include:

- CDFS SWIs (e.g. CDFS_ConvertDriveToDevice)
- CDFSDriver SWIs (e.g. CD_PlayAudio)
- the interface between CDFSDriver and soft-loaded device drivers

We appreciate that these wholesale changes will mean that current applications and drivers which make use of these interfaces will require modification, and we would like to minimise, where possible, the effort required. To help us achieve this, if you believe your products may be affected, we would like to know:

- which of your products are likely to be affected;
- for each affected application, a list of any CDFS and CDFS/Driver SWIs that are called.

Details of the proposed new interfaces will be made available as soon as firm specifications have been prepared. Please let us know if you require the details.

!System and System resources

Some improved resources for !System usage should be available over the next few months to cover a wide range of system installations across RISC OS 3 versions. We will provide details to Developers as soon as they are confirmed.

System path

It is recommended that you use System: to refer to resources within !System rather than using System\$Path as some recent releases of !System, such as that released with the 3.60 ROM, use a multi-path System\$Path. e.g. in a !Run file of an application use:

RMEnsure ColourTrans 0.51 RMLoad System:Modules.Colours

instead of

RMEnsure ColourTrans 0.51 RMLoad <System\$Path>Modules.Colours

Changes to the Risc PC 'Auxilliary Audio' connector

Following the introduction of 16-bit sound onto the motherboard of the Risc PC, the following changes have been made to the two auxilliary audio connectors (LK13 and LK14).

8-Bit Sound PCBs (0197,000 and 0197,100)

A full description of the signals available on these connectors is provided in the Technical Reference Manual for the Risc PC. In brief these are:

LK13: Auxilliary Audio Connector A

- Pin 1: Raw Left
- Pin 2: 0V
- Pin 3: Left
- Pin 4: 0V
- Pin 5: Aux In
- Pin 6: 0V
- Pin 7: Right
- Pin 8: 0V
- Pin 9: Raw Right
- Pin 10: 0V

LK14: Auxilliary Audio Connector B

- Pin 1: Right In
- Pin 2: Right Out
- Pin 3: Left In
- Pin 4: Left Out
- Pin 5: 0V (only on 0197,100 PCB)

16-Bit Sound PCB (1108,000)

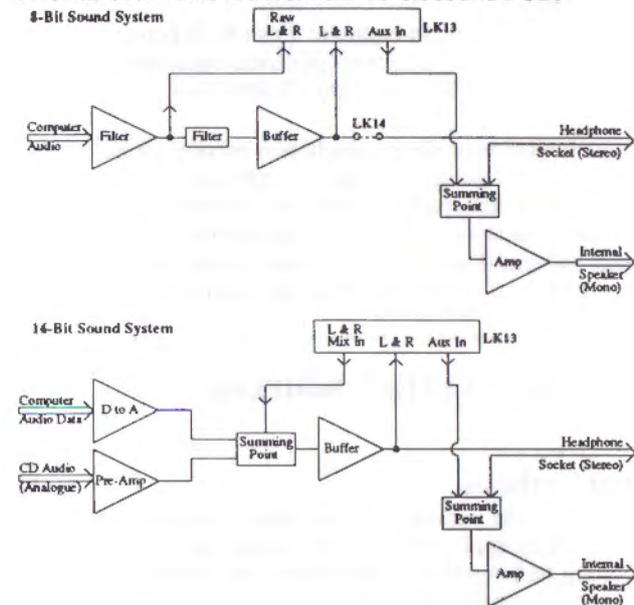
LK13: Auxilliary Audio Connector A

The "Raw" signals on pins 1 and 9 of LK13 do not, as such, exist within the 16-bit sound circuitry. These two pins have been reassigned as INPUTS to the CD/Computer Audio summing point within the sound circuit (before the final buffering/amplification stage). They can be driven by a signal that is typically up to 2.5V peak-to-peak into 47kOhms.

"Left", "Right" and "Aux In" are as on the 8-bit sound PCBs (pin numbers remain unchanged).

LK14: Auxilliary Audio Connector B

This has been removed from the 16-bit sound PCB.



Safety

Electrical safety:

Within the UK there is no legal requirement to have a piece of electrical equipment tested by a third party for safety apart from specialist equipment intended for use in a specific situation e.g. explosive atmosphere, medical equipment etc. or by contractual obligations.

However, by obtaining a third party certificate for your product it will provide you with a significant item for your defence in any liability claim.

Legal Documents:

The legal requirements of the Low Voltage Directive - LVD, which includes CE Marking, are contained in:

Statutory Instrument No 94/3260

The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994
ISBN 0-11-043917-1

Obtainable from good bookshops or from HMSO

CE Marking:

CE Marking of electrical equipment, to state that it meets the electrical safety requirements of the LVD, is allowable from 1st January 1995 and becomes compulsory on 1st

January 1997. Note that the CE Marking for EMC is allowable now and compulsory from 1st January 1996. You will need to decide which Directives you are claiming conformance with.

For advice on electrical CE Marking consult the DTI Consumer Safety Unit who have issued (in June this year) a Guidance Note. This note covers the use of a Technical Construction File TCF to cover the requirements of the Directive which a lot of people will use instead of, or in addition to, third party testing.

Electrical enquiries should be directed to:
The Consumer Safety Unit on (0171) 215 3284
The DTI general telephone enquiries number is (0171) 215 5000.

Validation:

Full safety testing of an equipment can be expensive. A list of test-houses which deal with electrical equipment can be obtained from the DTI Consumer Safety Unit.

All test-houses provide a consultation service for an economical fee and they should be contacted. They will provide advice on specific points, will confirm which electrical engineering standard is appropriate to your project and provide you with a written quote on any testing to be carried out. If possible read the standard before the

consultation in order to have a better understanding of the vocabulary and to prepare your questions.

Standards:

The IT industry uses IEC950 Safety of IT Equipment and Business Machines with the European 'harmonised' version being EN60950; the version normally used by Acorn. However, your particular equipment may also need to meet other standards due to the use of components such as lasers or being intended for non-european markets. You are strongly advised to design your equipment to meet an appropriate engineering standard.

Some central libraries hold copies of all BSI Standards and these can be consulted but there is usually a strict rule enforced of no photocopying.

A copy of these standards can be obtained from BSI Standards on (0181) 996 7000; Fax (0181) 9967001.

Developers' Disc 38

This compilation disc contains nothing that has not previously been provided on earlier Developers' Discs. Some of the software on the disc has, however, been updated and supersedes earlier versions so we would be grateful if you would use the versions provided on Developers' Disc 38.

News from other sources

From Cathexis

Miles Sabin, the author of Bubble help, a replacement for Acorn's !Help application, is now trading as Cathexis, providing Acorn software developers with an online and hard-copy documentation service.

Applications targetted at non-specialists need accessible and comprehensive documentation, but because its production is time-consuming it often gets neglected in the rush to get products to market. Cathexis will take over the chore, freeing developers to get on with what they do best.

Right now Cathexis can offer authoring of hard-copy manuals and interactive help messages for applications designed to support Acorn's interactive help protocol, complete with a licence to distribute Bubble help. All developers need do is provide a reasonably stable copy of their product, some development or design notes and some indication of house style. Cathexis will do the rest. At the moment Cathexis can supply hard-copy documentation as Impression Publisher documents, and in the future they

hope to be able to take manuals right through to press, including liasing with printers.

By year end 1995 Cathexis also will be able to offer authoring of context-sensitive hyper-text help, complete with a licence to distribute Hyper guide, a comprehensive hyper-text browser offering features beyond those of MS Windows Help. They will provide software developers with sample code, in C, C++, assembler and BASIC, to integrate Hyper guide with their applications.

For further details, contact Miles Sabin on 01273-732338 or e-mail cathexis@mistral.co.uk

From Alternative Publishing

Alternative Publishing wish to inform Registered Developers that they are currently offering to print a run of 5000 full colour A4 flyers for £399.00. This offer is especially useful for those Developers planning their promotional materials for the forthcoming Acorn World '95 exhibition.

If you require further details, contact Suhail Rehman, Sales Manager for Alternative Publishing on (0141) 248 2322.

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