PRINTERS ANGEL

FOR THE BBC MICRO

Printers Angel is a general utility program which allows the User to modify the visual appearance of any printed document, letter or label. Designed to work with the popular NLQ printers, it allows the definition of the Near Letter Quality typeface.

The definition program contains large amounts of machine code to allow the User to quickly and efficiently design each character. This also reduces the program size to allow extra facilities such as italicized characters, multiple character definition and many other features.

The download program allows the existing disc-based typefaces to be transferred into the printer to immediately select the new mode. Written in machine-code it allows the transfer to take place even while processing documents within your wordprocessor, such as Wordwise. Five popular pre-defined typefaces are supplied and a further utility allows the **BBC character set to be transferred into a typeface. Printers Angel even allows use of such functions as double width characters and underscore within your text.**

You may also enter normal draft modes such as this one **or this one. You may then return to** STANDARD NLQ **or the defined NLQ, without reloading from disc.**

The screen is divided into four different areas for ease of use. The Typefont panel, individual Character panel, information panel and the general options.

Whilst in the typeface panel selection of the character to be edited is easy and quick and functions such as italicize, wipe, set the printing range, proportional spacing mode, etc. may be set from this panel without the need to jump between panels. At any time a character may be selected and copied into other character positions to speed up the definition of similar characters, eg. a **O** may be copied and then edited to become **C**, **G**, and **Q**. Typefaces may be merged together or downloaded to the printer.

The Character panel displays the character as a series of large dots which are exactly as they would be output to the printer. The character may be italicized, wiped, etc. Additional options assist in the definition. The User may cursor around the character to flip individual pixels, shift the character left, right, up or down, move rows of pixels and many further options. Particularly useful is the facility to define a figure of eight grid which will be displayed as the background to assist in design and size consistency without the need to see the characters together.

A further feature is the ability to design multiple character symbols using a scrolling character system. This useful facility may be used for designing company logos or designing non-standard symbols to be contained within text, such as [redacted] ↑ ← etc.

TYPEFONTS TO BE DOWNLOADED INTO THE PRINTER WILL REQUIRE A 6264 RAM CHIP. THE FONTS MAY BE PROGRAMMED INTO AN EPROM SHOULD YOU DESIRE.

only £19.95

MINERVA SYSTEMS
69 Sidwell Street, Exeter, Devon EX4 6PH
Telephone: 0392 37756

6264 RAM chips also available at **£6.00**

Printers Angel

Printers Angel from Minerva Systems costs £27.95 and consists of a dual format 40/80 track diskette and a 28 page instruction manual.

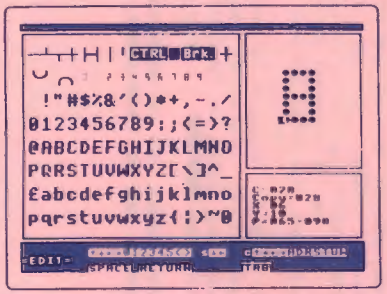
When the disk is 'booted' up Printers Angel is loaded in. It consists of a BASIC program and a large section of machine code. The display used is Mode 4, see Figure 1, and is divided up into four panels.

To move from one panel to another, ‹SHIFT›‹cursor left› will take you into the Typeface panel, ‹SHIFT›‹cursor right› into the Character panel, and ‹SHIFT›‹f› into the General options panel.

Initially you are taken into the General options panel. From here you could load or save a typeface file, quit the program, or enter banner mode (more of that later).

It is now a simple matter of using the cursor keys to move a cursor over the character in the typeface panel that you require to edit. Entering the Character panel (by using the procedure outlined above), will cause the dot representation of the character to be drawn in the Character panel prior to editing.

Printers Angel's screen display



Whilst in the Character panel, the cursor keys are employed to move the cursor around the character. When over a dot, the space bar will toggle that dot on or off.

Printers Angel also offers some more advanced facilities that can be useful whilst editing a character. These are detailed below.

Whilst editing a typeface, or designing a new typeface, it is useful to have a background grid, so that the characters may be created to the same size. This grid consists of two vertical lines and three horizontal lines. The grid is enabled by pressing keys 1 to 5 inclusive. Each key corresponds to one of the grid lines. Thus by positioning the cursor over the desired row/column and pressing the relevant key a grid can quickly be created. Pressing 0 will erase the grid.

Individual rows of the character may be shifted to either the left of right by one pixel by pressing ‹ or › respectively. Alternativly, the whole character can be moved around by a pixel at a time by pressing CTRL and the cursor key corresponding to the direction.

Most NLQ printers also allow for *proportional* mode printing and for character to have descenders. Proportional means that the characters will be printed out with a defined amount of spacing rather than each being the same width. This allows for characters such as W to take up more room than I. Setting the descender for a character will cause the printer to print it two pixels lower than normal. This is particularly useful for characters that have 'tails' such as q y p g j. Pressing CTRL-A will enable you to alter the characters attributes for proportional mode and its descenders. For more information you will have to consult your printer manual's NLQ definition section.

Whilst editing a character, it is possible to obtain a printout of its makeup by pressing ‹CTRL›‹D› (see Figure 2). Any background grid lines will also be printed out.

Pressing ‹CTRL›‹T› will cause the typeface to be downloaded into the printer and a sample printout obtained

One of Printers Angel's most powerful facilities is the *banner mode*. It may be necessary to define a character or logo which extends beyond the width of a single character. This can be created by making use of the banner mode. Quite simply, it enables a group of characters to be edited as normal, except that when you go past the edge of one character, instead of the cursor 'wrapping round', the whole character scrolls by one pixel and the definition of the next character appears. This facility is extremly easy to use and allows special characters to be quickly developed. See Figure 3 for a sample printout.

A small utility program supplied on the disk is called PAdownL. This program asks you to enter a character range, and then convers the specified characters from BBC format into a data file that Printers Angel can understand. I tried this utility out and created a typeface containing the characers from my Master

In Conclusion

Printers Angel is aimed at the user who is going to spend some time designing typefaces, and as such the editor is one of the best that I've used. It is a well thought out package that is extremely easy to use and has some very powerful features, especially the banner mode.

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