

I. Preliminary notes on PC-Outline:

- A. These notes by: David J. Lewis
- B. Date: 3/7/86
- C. Circumstances: I've used PCO for about 6-8 hours of production work on V.1.02, shareware copy, without full documentation (registered copy ordered), mainly creating and editing outlines, with little printing and wp functions.
- D. Contact me at:
 - 1) c/o MECA, 285 Riverside Avenue, Westport CT 06880, 203-222-1000 x7705 (temporary)
 - 2) SystemCrafts Inc, Box 6443, Ithaca, New York 14850 (permanent)
 - 3) PC Rockland BBS, 914-353-2176
 - 4) CIS, 70105,1242 (E-mail)

II. Bugs, dangerous "features" and "obvious" oversights:

- A. Delete word right: doesn't delete last character of last word at the end of an outline element
- B. Under some circumstances, part of a word does not wrap properly to the next line. Sorry, I can't reproduce it, but it happened when the nesting level was fairly deep and the automatic horizontal scroll was in effect.
- C. Escape from PCO is too easy -- especially after escaping from some other comand, it's surprising (and dangerous) to find another <escape> asking you to leave PCO. I often just lean on <escape> to get back to the top of whatever I was doing. I know that one can back out of the final escape, but there ought to be two full levels of protection here, and you've reduced it to one-and-a-half. On a PC KB, the sequence: "ly" would cause a catastrophic exit if one hit <escape> instead of "l". On an AT KB, it's even worse, since the sequence: <backspace> "y" could become <escape> "y", though the spacing on the KB is a bit more generous there. PLEASE CHANGE THIS! Escaping from PCO MUST be a double-keystroke function -- it doesn't happen often enough to justify making it so easy. Suggestion: just disable <escape> as escape from PCO; "<insert> Q" is good enough.
- D. After the menu-select key, <escape> takes you out of PCO -- it should just undo the menu-select key.
- E. Are there really no lower-case Roman numerals?

III. Suggestions and opinions:

- A. Accept a typed name on the file selection list so that PCO can be started with KeyFake for a particular file. Better yet, accept a filename as a parameter
- B. Backspace shouldn't erase beyond the beginning of an outline element -- that often causes unwanted erasure at the end of the preceding element (especially with QuickKeys)
- C. PCO needs a better way of arranging/selecting a window -- how about choosing a window to activate from the window list (from control-z).
- D. "/" is a poor default for the menu character; how about "\" (I know you can change it, but the default ought to be a better choice)
- E. It would be nice to have a single key to start a new element indented, rather than the sequence: ^return, f6.
- F. Selection boxes (no/yes, etc) would look a tad better if the reverse video were only as wide as the widest selection rather than the entire box/header.
- G. Editing causes text to be unhidden -- couldn't that be

postponed until the hidden text is actually changed? This would allow minor editing of the first line of text without opening it all up.

- H. I can't find an option for vertical spacing before paragraphs -- perhaps this belongs with global outline style, with a different spacing at each level; it's presently spacing of 0 at all levels (single spacing). Manually inserting a preceding blank line (as I've done here) is no substitute for this feature.
- I. I dislike the half-page jump when inserting words on the bottom line of the screen. What's wrong with one-line scrolling, just as when adding a new paragraph at the bottom?
- J. Is there any way to get an outline title or text at the top that is totally outside the outline (or can that be fudged with unnumbered paragraphs)?
- K. "DELETE word left/right (control-arrow)" is too similar to "MOVE word left/right (shift-arrow)." Confusing them can be unpleasant, so this might be a good spot for some command "decoupling."
- L. I don't fully understand the algorithm for placing the cursor horizontally after up/down movement between paragraphs. Would it be better not to move it horizontally at all, even if it means putting the cursor beyond the end of a line?
- M. The use of <insert> for menu bar activation is going to attract some (justifiable) brickbats. How about a function key -- two are unassigned (or have you other plans?), or gray + or -, shoving "zoom" onto the FKeys.
- N. The method for block operation seems a little less intuitive than the one I'm used to.
 - 1) PCO's method requires:
 - a) specify operation and mark start of block (in one stroke)
 - b) move cursor to end of block
 - c) mark end of block
 - d) move cursor to insert point
 - e) invoke operation
 - 2) The method I'm used to (from the Mac, etc) is
 - a) mark start of block
 - b) move cursor to end of block
 - c) mark end of block
 - d) move cursor to insert point
 - e) specify and invoke operation (in one stroke)

Thus, the methods involve the same number of strokes.

However, PCO's method introduces a "mode" (limited universe) from the beginning to the end, while method 2's steps (a) to (d) are completely generic and not tied to any particular operation. For example, one could do other things after marking the block and before invoking the operation, but once an operation is started in PCO's method, it must be run to completion immediately, and that's not as intuitive or flexible, in my opinion. The only advantage to PCO's method is that it requires one less dedicated key, since the "mark start of block" operation is always combined with the selection of the editing operation, but I don't think that's necessarily an advantage since it doesn't save any strokes in actual operation.

IV. Kudos: In general, this is a very good program. It looks and feels quite smooth, complete and well thought out; I

gather that the author(s) is (are) capable of a fully professional product and intend to market it as such. I'm not familiar with other PC outliners, but PCO is much better than Think Tank 512/Mac. I'm glad to see a program like this in Shareware, despite the slightly steep asking price for that realm. Support it (with service, bug fixes and upgrades) and you've got at least one permanent customer. However, present users do seem to be "beta testers," so you should give them (us) a break!

- V. Questions: Who and how many of there are you? Will you publish a phone number, start some customer service, appear on CompuServe, put up a bbs, etc?

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