

Dvorak and his usual partner Nick Anis (plus team newcomer Werner Feibel) have collaborated to toss one of those “everything you ever wanted to know” books at us in *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity*. Read though its 800+ pages of computer history and hardware and software lore and you may feel as if you've been buried alive.

But is it any good? Well, yes, and no. Readers may find the information on such pre-computing communications mediums as telegraph interesting, and the Dvorak team peppers *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* with useful tidbits such as the warning against plugging a monochrome monitor into a color graphics adapter card, but we found much of the first half of the book to be just so much rehash. *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* goes beyond the usual—and included—“CGA vs. EGA vs. VGA” rhetoric, but we question how many readers of a generalist volume will have any sort of use for the difference between 90, 180, 270, and 360-degree phase shifts.

*Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* takes on the tone of both advertisement and instruction manual in spots. We were astonished to find actual step-by-step operating instructions for two popular FAX boards, but even more so when a discussion of disk compression pointed to the relatively obscure *Squish Plus*, Sundog Software's painfully slow precursor to today's more popular *Stacker* and *SuperStor*.

We're treated to Dvorak's acerbic wit only sporadically, but the choice of subjects is wonderful. Software developers wasting otherwise-useful resources on litigious behavior are briefly lambasted in the same voice that Dvorak uses in his columns, and the tendency of many modern-day software titles to take over ever-larger portions of hard disk is observed to be a “glandular problem”. One thing's certain: this isn't dry reading.

When it finally gets around to fulfilling the title of the book, *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* does a first rate job. A thorough discussion of graphic and text file conversions is undertaken, and includes just enough information on such semi-technical subjects as file headers to lead power-user wannabees in the right direction. Some common-sense advice is also included, such as the practical statement that if you can't see a change you make to a graphic image, you shouldn't bother. *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* also gives an introduction to network protocols, of course, including a simple beginner's explanation of the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) model.

*Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* could change the way you use some software even if it didn't include some of its own. We aren't terribly impressed with the suite of miscellany that's bundled with the book (although the electronic “lava lamp” is fun), and the usual shareware disclaimer is attached to much of it, but *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* includes licensed copies of Inset Systems' *Hijaak*, MasterSoft's *Word for Word*, and Artisoft's *LANtastic Z*, making it a real bargain. All three are limited versions, and both *Hijaak* and *Word for Word* are differentiated from their shrink-wrapped kin by virtue of having their respective file filters scaled back, but if you want to connect two computers into a simple network, *LANtastic Z* and a cable are all you'll need.

Whether or not you like Dvorak's work, you have to be impressed by how prolific the man is, and his broad range of knowledge. It appears that with *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity*, the guy whose picture goes on the cover has scaled back his personal involvement, but a copy of *Dvorak's Guide to PC Connectivity* is likely to prove a valuable asset to many, nonetheless.