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LONGMAN LOGOTRON PINPOINTS A LANDMARK

Longman Logotron has been busy lately with a new version of PinPoint and four new packs in the Landmarks series. PinPoint has been upgraded to version 1.16, and has a number of new features including grid options for page editors; visible print borders; a show rulers option; the ability to print the current sheet during data input; a selection menu on page editors; editing of text style of selected non-frame objects; a configure option for the pen and question tool; horizontal bar and line charts; and the ability to swap axes in bar and line charts dynamically. All registered users should have received an upgrade disc with instructions by the end of April.

Four new Landmark packs have been released by Longman Logotron and BBC Enterprises to join the four titles available at the moment (*The Victorians*, *Second World War*, *Egypt* and *Rainforest*). Available in July 1992 are *Columbus* (in which you join Columbus on his historic voyage) and *The Aztecs* (in which you experience life in the fabled city of Tenochtitlan, capital city of Montezuma's Aztec empire). Then in September 1992, *Elizabeth I* (visit a large country house in Tudor England) and *The Civil War* (battle between the Roundheads and the Cavaliers in the Stuart period) should be available. The packs are developed from the most popular television programmes in the BBC's Landmarks series, and *Columbus* and *The Aztecs* complement the Landmarks Explorers unit to be broadcast in Autumn 1992. Each pack costs £28.20 inc. VAT.

Longman Logotron can be found at 124 Cambridge Science Park, Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 4ZS, tel. (0223) 425558, fax (0223) 425349.

SILICON VERSIONS

Silicon Vision has announced a new version of its RiscBASIC compiler, Release 3, which offers increased execution speed performance, robustness and ease of use over the previous version 2.06. The compiler includes a Desktop Developer's Environment (DDE) system for editing Basic programs in an Edit window, from

COMPUTER CONCEPTS GOES WILD

Computer Concepts has announced the acquisition of a majority stake in Wild Vision, the hardware developer which specialises in video and multimedia cards. Wild Vision has been manufacturing Computer Concepts' expansion cards for a while, and the decision to cement their business relationship could yield some interesting products. It is intended that Wild Vision should retain its identity in its daily business, with Computer Concepts taking only a background role and lending support as and when required.

The takeover will result in the two companies joining forces on selected ventures, with Wild Vision concentrating on the hardware and Computer Concepts on the software. Peter Wild, Wild Vision's managing director, indicated a likely market strategy: "We are now poised to forge ahead in multimedia applications... I believe that this turn of events will prove to be catalytic in giving Wild Vision's Desktop video products a considerable step-up in the multimedia arena as a whole."

According to Wild Vision, the Computer Concepts merger will bring financial security and will lend a market presence which would otherwise have been beyond their reach. Hopefully this will mean that its Eagle Desktop video board, which was on show at the BBC Acorn User Show last year, will get over its design problems and see daylight soon. Wild Vision is also working on a full technical support facility to complement its growing range of products.

ACORN S REPLAY MULTIMEDIA VIDEO SYSTEM

Acorn has developed an exciting full motion video system called *Replay*. This is a piece of software that enables compressed pictures, stored on mass media such as CD-ROM, to be shown in a Desktop window at a rate of 12.5 frames per second (from a CD-ROM - hard disc storage would increase the speed, but would decrease the storage space). This is no mean feat, as the amount of information needed to display a sequence of pictures is considerable.

Replay takes a normal sequence of uncompressed pictures and reduces their storage size by removing very detailed data from the image which the eye can't detect. It then reduces the size further by employing Delta compression, which concentrates on the moving parts of an image and enables static parts to be stored in very little memory. Finally the

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compressed images are put on hard disc or CD-ROM, enabling about 12 seconds of pictures at 12.5 frames per second to be stored on one 800K Archimedes disc. The data can also include multiple channel stereo sound to go with the pictures.

Although Replay requires expensive extra equipment to create the sequences, it opens up new possibilities for multimedia systems. Magpie and Genesis (two popular multimedia packages) both contain support for Replay sequences, so moving pictures can now be a part of multimedia releases (for example, the *Dictionary of the living world* CD-ROM mentioned in April's news).

DT SOFTWARE SEES THE LIGHT

DT Software has announced two new products for the Archimedes. The first is a 21Mb floppy disc drive (yes, twenty-one megabytes!), which uses optical tracking technology to store huge amounts of data on special 3.5" discs. The so-called *Floptical* drive uses discs that have concentric rings etched on them which the head can follow, allowing data to be saved at over 1000 tracks per inch (compared to conventional 3.5" discs which have 135 tracks per inch). The drive can also read and write to PC format 720K and 1.44Mb floppies, but the drive requires a firmware change to access Acorn format discs - apparently the manufacturer is aware of this and will implement it if there is sufficient demand from the Acorn marketplace for the alteration to be worthwhile. The drive costs £449.95 inc. VAT, and the special discs, each of which can store 21Mb, cost £24.95 inc. VAT.

The other new product from DT Software also has an optical connection - it is a hand-held portable electronic still camera which can take and store up to 32 pictures in its on-board battery-backed RAM, for subsequent downloading to a computer. Image resolution is 376x288 in 8 bits per pixel monochrome, and the software supplied allows manipulation of the image brightness, contrast and "tone" (gamma correction), as well as basic image processing functions including sharpening and smoothing. The output from the *Fotoman* camera is claimed to be of a much higher quality than comparable colour digitisers because the camera takes pictures digitally, avoiding the need to convert the conventional analogue signal. The *Fotoman* for the Archimedes costs £553.15 plus VAT. DT Software is on (0223) 841099.

IRLAM ANNOUNCES ITS FAX/MODEM CARD

which programs can be compiled simply by dragging the file to the RiscBASIC icon. Errors are then highlighted in the Edit window, making program development much easier. The Twin and Basic editors are also directly supported by the DDE, and the user can swap between using the DDE, using icons to drive the compilation and using the command line without the need to reconfigure the compiler.

Silicon Vision has also updated its entry level electronic PCB design package ARC-PCB. Release 1.7 provides faster and improved automatic routing, oval and circular pads with fully variable sizes, faster redraw, extended library part manipulation and instant editing operations. The full range of RISC OS printer drivers are also supported via a Draw file export facility, which also enables further editing in Draw



and the inclusion of a design in a DTP package.

The cost for RiscBASIC 3 is £149.95, and ARC-PCB 1.7 costs £195.00. To upgrade your present software, simply return your original disc(s) to Silicon Vision with the correct payment. Upgrading to RiscBASIC 3 costs £30 from version 2.06 with the DDE, or £55 from version 2.06 without the DDE and earlier versions. The upgrade price for ARC-PCB is £55. All prices include VAT and post and packing, and Silicon Vision is at Signal House, Lyon Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2AG, tel. 081-861 2173, fax 081-427 5169.

L ART SMART

4Mation has gone international and released French and German versions of their Faces, Homes and Leisure smArt packs; Spanish and Welsh versions are under preparation. There is also a Modern Languages pack which features French,

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Irlam is planning to release its *Fax-Im* card around June of this year, at a cost of £289 plus VAT. The card not only performs fax reception and transmission (like the Computer Concepts' FaxPack), but can also be used as a modem. The list of features is impressive - the card has full group 3 fax compatibility with document transmission up to 9600 bits/sec; it can auto-answer after a programmable number of rings; it will transmit sprites as a fine fax (approx. 200x200 dpi) if the sprite's resolution demands it; support is provided for fast DTMF or Pulsed dialling; sprites can be compressed using MH coding (as in the group 3 specification), allowing typical compression ratios of around 10 to 1; a modified printer driver supplied with the fax allows RISC OS applications to produce monochrome sprites for transmission; the modem supports V22, V22bis, V23, MNP 2,3,4,5 compression/error control, and V42bis compression (like MNP 6); the fax operates in the background during reception and transmission.

Irlam has also improved its *Moving i-Mage* Desktop video system. The driver module has been enhanced to reduce loading and saving times of images, and images can now be panned off screen. A new demonstration application supports zooming and can remove motion artefacts, and scaling factors and acquisition addresses can now be defined by the user. Moving i-Mage costs £989 plus VAT. Irlam is at 133 London Road, Staines, Middlesex TW18 4HN, tel. (0895) 811401.

CHEAP DIGITISING FROM HCCS

HCCS Associates has announced its extremely low cost black and white *Vision Digitiser*, which should be available as this goes to print. The board takes a signal from a standard video source (like a VCR or a CamCorder) and produces a black and white sprite in a Desktop window. The image takes approximately 5 seconds to materialise, but the capture time is "real-time" (i.e. within one video frame). The image size is 640x256 pixels with 128 effective grey scales using so-called ETT (Error Transfer Technique).

The software includes on screen brightness and contrast controls, and there is a fast preview mode to enable speedy setting up and focusing. The digitiser costs just £49 plus VAT for an A3000 internal podule or an Archimedes half width podule, or £62 plus VAT for the A3000 external board. A colour upgrade will be available in June at approximately £30, with a discount to existing owners.

German, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish, Italian, Greek and Hebrew, and comes on two discs, one about meals, and another about items you might find on a shelf.

The complete range of smArt packs comprises Fashion, Heraldry, Homes, Leisure, Trees & Gardens, Dinosaurs, Faces, Smartoons, Aliens and Look Smart. Each of these packs and the French and German versions cost £16 plus VAT, and the Modern Languages pack costs £20 plus VAT. The smArt package which is needed to use these packs costs £64.65 inc. VAT.

On a more serious note, 4Mation has recently employed FAST (Federation Against Software Theft) to act on its behalf against a bulletin board, after it discovered that the board had 35 4Mation Draw files in its downloadable software. On this occasion it was decided to take no action after the SysOp agreed to remove the copyright material.

4Mation can be discovered at 14 Castle Park Road, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 8PA, tel. (0271) 25353, fax (0271) 22974.

LAPPING IT UP

It seems that the eagerly awaited and rumour-bound Archimedes portable will appear in public sometime in the next few months. You can be sure we'll bring you bang up to date with any developments on this front at the earliest opportunity.

RISC OS 3

The new operating system, RISC OS 3, will be available for RISC OS 2 machines "sometime in the summer" according to Acorn, and a RISC OS 3 Programmer's Reference Manual is being produced which will stretch to 6 volumes. All A5000s will continue to be supplied with version 3.00, despite a number of bugs in the operating system.

ARCHIMEDES CONVERSES WITH PSION

ICL is a multi-tasking application that allows the Archimedes to be connected to a Psion series 2, and hopefully at a later date the

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package will be updated to include communication with the other Psion personal organisers. Using the Psion's protocol enables a host of features to be used including error detection and correction, and being able to open a file on the Archimedes and read, write and transfer it. !CL costs £25 and entitles the customer to free upgrades as well as discounts on any further products. For more information, connect up to Godders Ware, 13 Prestbury Close, Blackpole Village, Worcester WR4 9XG.

CLASSY SOFTWARE

Class 3 at St George's RC Primary School in Newcastle-upon-Tyne have been studying various topics in lessons, and have put everything they have learned onto disc. Now the class has formed their own software company called *No Frontiers Software*, and the first releases are *Hyper-Viking* and *Halloween*, with another title *Hyper-Europe* which should have been released by the time you read this. The packages are in the form of multimedia "books", and use sound and graphics to make the information appeal to children. The discs are only £2.50 each inclusive, and cheques should be made payable to St George's School and sent to No Frontiers Software, St George's Primary School, Bell's Close, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE15 6XX, tel. 091-267 5677.

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HCCS is at 575-583 Durham Road, Gateshead NE9 5JJ, tel. 091-487 0760, fax 091-491 0431.

FOURTH DIMENSION CHECKS IT OUT

The Fourth Dimension have announced a new game that they plan to release in early June 1992. It's called *Cyber Chess*, and is claimed to be "the definitive Chess playing program". As with Micro Power's *Chess3D*, the board is displayed in a Desktop window, and can be viewed in 3 dimensions or directly from above. *Cyber Chess* is fully RISC OS compliant - you can even have multiple windows, each containing a different game.

All the rules of Chess are implemented, including en passant, underpromotions, the 50/75 move rule and draw by agreement and repetition. The package includes a tutorial, and with 100 beginners' levels, you can graduate from a very easy game up to "full strength mode". The computer can also give you hints on the best move to make, enabling the unscrupulous to improve their game statistics.

The game can also be installed on a hard disc, which will be a feature of all future Fourth Dimension games. *Cyber Chess* will cost £49.95 inc. VAT. For further information contact Steve Botterill at The Fourth Dimension, 1 Percy Street, Sheffield S3 8AU, tel. (0742) 700661.

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