

WRITE-BACK

A4 TO THE FORE

I have read the letters in Write-Back about the A4, and would like to add my comments on this remarkable machine. My writer son has until recently earned his living with an A440/1 system. Although in other respects it is ideal, for him there are two drawbacks. One is fan noise, which he finds distracting, and the other is the fact that he cannot take it with him on his travels.

Now all that has changed. With a standard PC2 keyboard and a colour monitor plugged into his A4 he has virtually all the resources of an A5000, as well as more space on his desk and silence, plus portability when he needs it.

This is a machine which surely justifies effort on Acorn's part to develop and promote it, and reduce the price through increased production. Otherwise, putting it on the market and leaving it to find its

THE A4 CHICKEN AND EGG SITUATION

own level is likely to result in it sinking without trace.

Jack Evans.

With reference to the recent correspondence on expanding the A4 Notebook, I would like to add one last comment for manufacturers to ponder on. In the PC world most notebook computers are sold because of the expansion facilities available. My point is this: the reason that there is not enough demand for a particular product could be because that product does not exist in the first place!

The A4 is an A5000 in a box. It is one of the most powerful RISC OS computers you can buy. It can be used professionally for DTP, but you can't plug in a scanner. It could be used as a powerful portable mixer/sequencer/recording studio, but MIDI is not available for it. It is even fast enough to produce Replay files at 25fps, but you can't plug in a digitiser. It is at least possible to plug in and use a fax/modem (and even this is due to an individual - David Pilling - who realised the potential of all the readily available fax/modems in the PC world), but not one of the faster ones because the serial port can't keep up, but there is nowhere else to plug one in.

I don't see why Acorn themselves have not encouraged this as it can

only increase A4 sales.

If every product for which there is 'not enough demand' were manufactured, the A4 would become a serious alternative to any other Acorn RISC OS computer (and indeed other PC notebooks

A PROGRESS REPORT

and desktops), more sales would be generated (a potential A5000 customer, for example, would seriously consider the A4 instead), and 'demand' would surely materialise.

Yet there is space for a very fast Ethernet card - something doesn't add up. Can anyone tell me that if all the above were readily available, sales of the A4 (and therefore demand for these products) would be as low as they are today?

Jimmy Imossi

May I first of all say that I think the new format of RISC User Magazine is excellent. I have progressed from the BBC computer through the Master 128 to an Archimedes 410/1 which I have enjoyed, particularly with RISC OS 3 fitted. My only disappointment with Acorn is that they didn't give more consideration to providing better PC emulation. OK, it isn't a PC; I accept that, but most of us have to use them at work, and it would be great to have the best of both worlds. I know that they have been supported by third party companies, but at a price, and even with version 1.8 of

Acorn's PC Emulator, it's not a lot of help as I can't read 1.44Mb discs.

J.S.Almey

THE POCKET BOOK

One should, perhaps, applaud the fact that the Archimedes is as capable of behaving like a PC to the considerable extent that it is. I wonder if an Apple Macintosh could do as well, but then there is little criticism that Apple's obviously incompatible machine can't emulate a PC: it is judged for itself. As far as 1.44Mb discs are concerned, this is a limitation of the hardware used in earlier machines in the Archimedes range; more recent systems, the A5000, the A3010, A3020 etc. can certainly cope (and RISC Developments will a 1.44Mb drive available for Acorn World).

The Psion Series 3 (or Pocket Book) is an immensely useful addition to the Acorn stable. The A-Link software works faultlessly, but how about some info regarding the replacement of Abacus on the menu with something more useful for all Series 3 users? It is possible to change the window, but I haven't managed to do it using the rather skimpy manual provided with the software.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

I use the Series 3 linked to a US Robotics Palmtop Fax Modem, and along with Fax3 software, this provides a very portable fax machine which you can use from your hotel room worldwide. You also need to buy a small lead (from Psion) which connects to the modem (total cost for the package around £120).

Dave Martin

We have included a review of Acorn's latest software release for the Pocket Book in this issue of RISC User. More feedback from readers using a Pocket Book (or Psion Series 3) in conjunction with an Archimedes would be most welcome. Readers may be interested to know that Psion has released the Psion Series 3a with an enlarged screen display - will Acorn adopt this as well? We must wait and see.

I would like to comment on the editorial in RISC User 6:9. I live in an area where the LEA has dictated policy in the past, and in Birmingham this has meant the RML Nimbus. As a parent helper I am considered an

MORE EXPERIENCES WITH CANON BUBBLE-JET PRINTERS

'expert' because I have time to read the manual, and know how to click a mouse. I would hope that now more schools control their own budget, then more schools will turn to Acorn machines. I certainly do my best to sell the idea. Having typed out some of the school magazine at home for some of the teachers so that an acceptable printout for photocopying could be obtained, it was claimed in the magazine that it had been produced on the school's own computers, a task for which the 8086-based machines were totally unsuitable. The only DTP we can use is Windows Write, with four fonts, and a quite noticeable delay in screen updating each time a character is typed in. This is alright for the children who take two hours to type in ten lines, but just think what they could achieve with an Acorn machine. I get far better output from my Electron.

Elaine Kemp

Do other readers have relevant experiences to relate on the choice of PC or Archimedes in relation to the issue of education versus training?



Points Arising . . .

JUST A PAGE (RISC User 6:9 Page 33)
Graham Crow has contacted us to point out that one line of his PROCd1 procedure can be simplified, and avoid occasional errors. The sequence:

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EVAL (STR$~+EVALsss$)
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can be simplified to:

