DTP Resources

Mike Williams looks at some useful desktop publishing aids

Design Concept s Kerner

Kerning is the process by which pairs of characters can be moved closer together or further apart. If each character is considered to occupy a fixed rectangular area, then certain pairs of characters can seem to be badly spaced when adjacent to one another. The classic example in this respect is the AW pair - because of their matching shapes, these two letters (in upper case) appear too far apart (see figure 1). Up until RISC OS 3.1, the outline font manager had no direct provision for kerning fonts, and fonts supplied at that time did not usually contain kerning information. That has now changed with RISC OS 3.1, but kerning is no use if existing fonts are missing the relevant data. That s where Design Concept s Kerner comes to the rescue.

Figure 1.
Typical spacing problem solved by kerning

Figure 3.
Manually kerning a pair of characters

Figure 5.
The example of figure 1 now automatically kerned with the help of KernAll

Kerner is supplied on a single disc containing the Kerner application itself, and a number of other resources, accompanied by a 32 page manual. While a number of applications have built in the facility to kern manually existing fonts (Ovation for example), what Kerner does is to add relevant kerning data to the font definition so that kerning can take place automatically.

Once Kerner has been installed you can either drag a font file or directory to its icon, or use Kerner s menu to select and load a font for you. Once the font is loaded the Manual Kerning Control window will be displayed (see figure 2). At this point you have a choice of manually controlling the generation of kerning data, or having Kerner do this for you automatically.

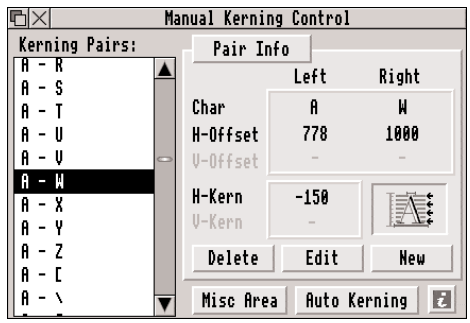

Figure 2.
The Manual Kerning Control window

AUTOMATIC KERNING

Most users, if they are interested in kerning at all, will probably opt for the auto option. There are still plenty of parameters to tinker with if you re really keen, but the main choice you need to make is the list of character pairs to be kerned. You can type these into the space in the kerning window, but Design Concept make life easy here too by providing three choices of preset file. Another method is to set ASCII code ranges for the first and second character of each pair. Whatever method, you then click on the Calculate button and wait; what follows can take some time.

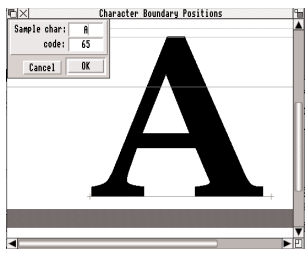

Figure 4.
Editing a single character

On completion, all the kerned pairs will be visible in a scrollable window. You can examine the detailed kerning of each pair and adjust it manually if you wish. You can also delete pairs and add new pairs to the list. Once you are satisfied with the results a menu option allows you to saved the kerned font back to disc to replace the original.

MANUAL KERNING

Automatically generated kerning pairs can still be adjusted manually. If you opt for totally

manual kerning then you simply do all the work yourself, using the mouse to position the characters of each pair in the Edit kern pair window (figure 3). Kerner also allows you to edit other font attributes such as character heights, underline, default offsets and font bounding box (figure 4). Indeed the font enthusiast is sure to find within Kerner plenty to wile away the hours.

KERNED FONTS IN USE

Remember that what we have been talking about is using Kerner to add kerning data to existing fonts. The real aim is to ensure that when such fonts are used, appropriate character pairs will be kerned automatically for optimum visual results. Unfortunately, in that respect, you are likely to be disappointed. In most cases you won t see any difference because the application you are using doesn t have the code to recognised kerned fonts when they occur.

To overcome this, Design Concept has supplied a small module which makes it all happen. If KernAll is loaded before any application, then kerning will take place automatically from then on regardless of the application. Figure 5 shows the results of my efforts to add kerning data to the font Paladin.Bold. In fact exactly the same Draw file was used as for the example of figure 1, but simply reloaded after kerning the font and loading KernAll.

PRODUCT INFO	
Product	Kerner
Supplier	Design Concept 30 South Oswald Road Edinburgh EH9 2HG

Gothic & Medieval Fonts Pack Two from

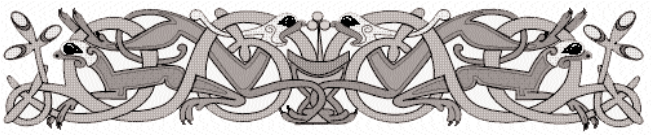

Figure 6. An example of an elaborate border design

This is the second font pack with this name to be released by The Datafile (the first was reviewed in RISC User 7:1). The pack, with its colourful flysheet, contains three discs and a short 12 page booklet. As with the first pack, all the new designs are by Tony Nash, and very good they look too. There are six fonts: Abby, Amadeus, Bede, El-Cid, Kells (based on characters in the Irish Book of Kells) and Scriptoria, plus associated swashes (fancy flourishes), borders and examples (as Draw files).

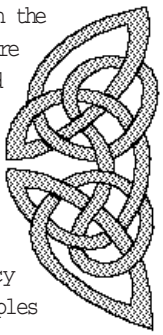

Figure 7. One of the intricate 'knots' from the Gothic and Medieval Fonts

Figure 8. The letter 'B' from the set of illuminated Celtic capitals

Pack Two draws heavily on Celtic culture for inspiration. Fonts such as Bede and Kells are particularly suited for this purpose, even more so when used in conjunction with the elaborate decorated Celtic capitals supplied as Draw files. The Bede and Kells fonts also contain all the accented characters which are required for correct rendition of Celtic, though these use character codes 128 and upwards and so must be selected using the Alt key method, or whatever.

There is a wealth of resources in this pack, and the fact that many of these are in the form of Draw files gives the user even more opportunity to modify, extract and mix the designs for almost infinite variety. While Gothic and medieval scripts and designs are not for everyone, there is much here to fascinate and inspire

PRODUCT INFO	
Product	Gothic and Medieval Fonts Collection Two
Supplier	The Datafile 71 Anson Road, Locking Weston-super-Mare Avon BS24 7DQ Tel. 0934 823005
Price	£40 inc. VAT and p&p