Good Impressions

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exercises his memory
and solves the riddle of
the missing font in
Impression

I n this issue we are going to look at a couple of problems that occasionally baffle some Impression users: memory usage and the dreaded Font not found message. Some of the tips may be relevant to users of other packages.

Thanks for the Memory

The Impression suite of programs uses a dynamic memory management system. By setting your computer appropriately, you can make maximum use of the available RAM for documents.

The first and perhaps most obvious area for attention is screen memory. Like any application, if you find you are running short of memory as you type into a document, it will help if you switch to a lower resolution screen. I tend to use mode 86 and the Task Manager tells me that this uses 160K of screen memory. Changing to mode 12 drops screen memory usage to 96K (80K if you have less than 4Mb of RAM in the computer).

Do not overlook the obvious - other applications present on the icon bar, such as Draw and Paint, will all use memory, so clearly, if memory is running short, all unnecessary applications should be terminated. But

remember that many such applications also load modules into the RMA area, and this memory is not reclaimed when you quit the application (though the Risc PC does go some way to overcome this problem). Sometimes you can drag the module area s slider bar in the Task Manager window to reduce the amount of memory used. Otherwise, if you have had applications loaded which use modules, save your work, press Reset and restart Impression before continuing.

Another area for attention is the Auto directory. You will find this directory inside the main Impression application. Double-click with Shift on the application icon to open its directory, then open the Auto directory in turn. Inside this directory are many of the modules which are loaded when you launch Impression. These include the dictionaries, printer modules, and loader modules as well as the default document. So, if you are repeatedly working at the limits of memory, move the modules that are not needed to a temporary directory away from the Auto directory, before loading Impression. You do need, however, to leave the Default document there or Impression won t load!

So far we have looked at the basic system and file layout. Within Impression there are several options which also control the way the program uses memory.

The Preferred Options
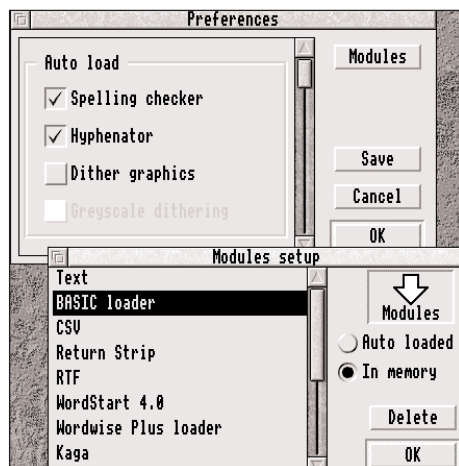
Choose the Preferences option

Figure 1. The modules setup box

on the icon bar menu, and this will open the Preferences dialogue box. At the top right of this box is a button labelled Modules which opens a Modules setup box (see figure 1) - this lists the modules held in the Auto directory mentioned above. Note that the directory is not called Extensions, as stated in the manual. These modules, if present when the application is started, are either held in memory for immediate use or are loaded when required. This can have a significant effect on the amount of memory left spare. For example, I have six such modules present, and between them they take up a little under 84K in total. So if you are running short, switch off the Auto Load option in the dialogue box. Note that modules which are auto-loaded are not removed from the RMA area when you quit Impression, so you may need to Reset afterwards.

Memory Management and Documents

One of the strengths of

Impression is that a document can be of any length, greater than machine memory constraints would allow. Ordinarily, Impression documents are split up into chapters, and a chapter is held in memory in its entirety. As memory grows short, however, parts of the document which are not being viewed may be saved to disc. This is called virtual memory as the disc surface is then being treated as an extension of machine RAM, although the process is completely transparent to the user. Obviously, before a document may be saved, a pathname must be present so that the machine knows where to put the parts of the document not currently needed. The easiest way to accomplish this is to save the document at an early stage of development. If you don t do this, you may get a Memory full message. You can always ensure that non-current parts of your document, that is chapters which are not currently being worked upon, are removed from memory and saved to disc by clicking on Minimise memory on the icon bar menu.

The logic of this is straightforward. Always divide your document into chapters as this will ensure that no more than the current chapter will be loaded at any one time when memory gets short.

File Formats

Finally, it is worth mentioning disc space in this context. Current versions of Impression have two file formats. There is the older format which was the only one available up to version 2.17, in which every file was saved as a directory (hence the exclamation mark at the beginning of every filename), and there is now the newer, single file format. If you habitually use the older directory format for Impression, you may well find that disc space disappears rapidly if you save many small documents. Changing this to single file format will usually effect a small but useful saving on disc space. The toggle to change between file formats is in the Preferences dialogue box from the File submenu (the two types of file are shown in figure 2).

The Lost Font

Now for a different problem. Read this slowly because it s complicated! Recently, I had cause to tidy up my Fonts directory, so I moved several lesser used fonts into another directory. In the meantime, on my hard disc, I already had a document which had originally used one of these fonts and which had then been saved with that font present. At a later date, that font was deleted from the document and the document was resaved. It was after this that I removed the font from the current Fonts directory.

So the situation that pertained

Figure 2.
The two kinds of Impression document file

was that I now had a document which once used a specific font but no longer did so, and concurrently I had removed the font from the font directory.

The odd thing was that when I tried to reload the document, the dreaded Some Fonts not found (including...) message popped up. It took some investigating to get to the bottom of this and I am indebted to Computer Concepts helpline for assistance. This problem is becoming more common with fonts readily available at low prices and users chopping and changing their fonts regularly. It is one of the reasons why a number of font handling utilities have become available in recent times.

It turns out that this feature is neither a bug nor a design error. It was simply not considered when the original specification for Impression was set up. The reference to the font that is no longer used does, in fact, remain within the document even though it is not used, and this is what was throwing up the error message. The way round the problem is this. Export your text as a text file by clicking with Menu or Adjust over the Save icon. Leave the With styles option set and save the text to a convenient disc. Then reload the text back into Impression by dropping it onto a blank window, and the hidden reference to a non-existent font will have been left behind in the original document. The beauty is that all the styles used in the original document will be copied over to the new document automatically.

A problem arises when you have set up a complex set of master or local page frames, as you cannot export these in the same way. The neat answer here is to group all the frames on a page into one frame, copy it to the clipboard and drop it back onto your new document window in the same position. You can then ungroup the frames. Obviously, you do this before transferring your text, and you need, of course, to transfer the master frames before you transfer any local frames. In this way, you can generate a document identical to the original but without the annoying internal reference to a font that isn t there any more.

That s all for this month. There are a lot of exciting new products from Computer Concepts on the market and I hope to