

FreeHand 4.0

Sneak Preview!



Aldus has just announced FreeHand 4.0. The many improvements include:

Floating palettes have replaced many of the program's dialog boxes. The Inspector palette functions as a master palette which controls most of the attributes of a selected object.

Text improvements: Text can now be entered directly into the document window; no more text entry dialog box! It also supports kerning, range kerning, automatic hyphenation, paragraph formatting (including such advanced attributes as paragraph rules).

Page Layout: Multiple pages of varying sizes can be created on a large pasteboard. Easy creation of columns and rows, text wrapping around any object, and linked text boxes are possible.

Other features: A Polygon tool (for stars and hexagons) and path operations that let users create new shapes by combining shapes or cutting one shape out of another. A new color mixing palette that allows drag-and-drop colors for fills and lines.

I've been working with a beta version for several months, and I'm enthusiastic about the new version.

by Jim Alley

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FreeHand 4.0's new interface: A few of FreeHand 4.0's eleven collapsible palettes can be seen in this screen shot. The Inspector palette provides access to many of the program's features: object attributes, fill types, line attributes, text formatting, and page layout. In this example, the center point of a radial fill is being adjusted.

Check Your Mac's Plumbing

I know this is something you don't want to hear. What I am about to tell you is almost as groan-producing as a plumber telling you that your house needs new pipes. However, I feel compelled to remind all you folks with scanners, SyQuest removable drives, multi-spin CD-ROM drives, and external SCSI devices of all types that your next upgrade should probably be your cables.

Most computer users get excited about the new "toy" and, when the salesperson at the store asks if they need a cable to add this new device to the system, the user thinks about the amount of money he or she just laid out and how they are going to explain this to the spouse and reply, "No thanks, I have a SCSI cable at home." Now, this cable may be several years old and was very expensive at the time of purchase, but, just as computers have improved over time, so have cables. Many manufacturers of computer peripherals obtain those wonderful performance specifications that attract us into the stores in search of the "best" by using double shielded, shielded hood, premium SCSI cables and active terminators. Let's take them one at a time.

Double shielded cable has two layers of shielding to prevent what is known as "line loss," or loss of signal through the surface of the cable itself. Those little electrons tend to get excited

and run off. Double shielding the hood at each end of the SCSI cable adds extra protection at the crucial entry and exit points for the signal, and some of the cable manufacturers are now using gold plated pins in the connectors. The descriptive word "premium" means just that — better wires inside, and better wires mean faster and cleaner signal feed. This will sound familiar to those of you who paid more than a few dollars for Monster Cable for your stereo system. If better wires make the stereo sound better, think what they can do for your data.

Active terminators are a new breed of terminator with the ability to smooth out the signal so you get a cleaner signal from the SCSI peripheral. These have little LEDs and come in some stealth colors, too. These are more than just tricks and can be very important during the transfer of large amounts of data from a color scanner or some of those big, fast drives like the Seagate Barracuda.

So stop your groaning, folks. The day is coming when you will be in the middle of a big job and the equipment you've spent so much money on will seem to fail you. It just won't do what you expected, and the problem may be your "pipes."

by Lynne Thomas

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