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ANuG
Newsletter

The Albuquerque NeXT Users Group
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Intro:

Well, you might have notice that the person putting out these Newsletters was not the sponsor. That was due to the fact that NeXT knew that Jeff Jortner had control over several NeXT computers at Sandia National Labs, what they didn't know was that he didn't have the time to run a users group. This has changed as of two days ago I am the new sponsor of ANuG. All this means is that Jeff's phone will ring a little bit less and mine a little more, and if you need have suggestions or comments about ANuG, direct them to me.

You Might have also noticed that there are now two email addresses in the header. This is because I am a college student and I don't know how much longer my account at UNM will be valid. Perhaps I can find a friendly system administrator and keep it for awhile. If you continue to get errors trying the UNM address, try the other. I will be going to NMSU on the 17th of Aug. I would like to try to hold a meeting every two months during the school year and see how that goes.

Meeting Synopsis:

Well for all those who could not attend, it was an experience. I would say somewhere between 20 and 25 people managed to show up. There was even an educator from Puerto Rico (he now has plans to buy 90 NeXT machines over the next three years). The highlights were me fouling up my station about half an hour before the meeting and Jeff Jortner and Andrew Stone working for an hour to remedy the mistake. During that time everyone was able to meet and greet everyone from Cray engineers to Desk Top Publishing professionals. There was a viewing of a video of the NeXT manufacturing plant, and the introduction of the Station and NeXT Dimension speech by Steve Jobs. Then Andrew Stone put on an impressive demo of his two major projects Create!, and DataPhile due out in final release on the 13th of September. (See reviews below of DataPhile and Create!) ANuG has received a fully licensed copy of SoftPC 2.01 for demonstrations. I installed SoftPC, created a 10meg

DOS partition (fdisk, format and all) and then installed Windows 3.0 on my NeXT Station. SoftPC is great if your field demands it, but it is still painfully slow and cumbersome. And that was it, the meeting was a true success.

Reviews:

Create!:

This is Andrew Stone's baby. He has slaved to make drawing easy and yet as powerful as Adobe Illustrator, and succeeded. There is the traditional tool box, and then a powerful object dependent Inspector panel. The Inspector panel is the trick to Create! it makes it simple to add and test attributes to an object and then continue to add and play. When the next object is drawn it too has the attributes of the last object making it easy to duplicate fine angles and offsets without the cut and paste routine. To disable the attributes simply click off the check mark. Create! has two text tools, one is the super text tool allowing all attributes of other objects to apply to it, the other is a text tool of the gods for DTP's. You type in a box of text and then when you grab the corners to expand the box the text reformats in real time. This allows several formats to be viewed quickly without damage to the surrounding art. Both text tools allow editing of the text at any time. One of the neat features of Create! is how you can copy art to a postscript text window and view the code behind your picture. Once there you can change variables and then display the result in a postscript window. This will do wonders for most of us postscript illiterates.

DataPhile:

Andrew Stone with Kristin Jensen have out done themselves with this product. This is a database minus the hassle. A user can create and modify a set of data fields at any time during its existence. You begin by outlining the fields you want. Then you enter design mode and graphically rearrange the fields expanding, and contracting as necessary, until you have a view you like. Each field which can be anything from simple text, to a postscript or tiff picture can be dropped into a well and viewed. Other unique fields are sound, file (allowing you to open that file by clicking on it), and boolean (with true, false, and nul states). You can sort by any field, you can search for any key in one or many fields making cross referencing simple, you can create multiple views of the data excluding fields as needed. This is the most versatile database I have ever seen. It does not carry the baggage of either the Sybase or Ingress, so there is no need to meddle in those grey areas of life. If you have the version of DataPhile from the Net, it has been substantially changed and the changes make all the difference. One very nice feature is DataPhile's ability to print envelopes, or labels. This is a must product.

MediaView:

Richard Phillips is a researcher at Los Alamos National Labs currently working on a multi-media. He will be demonstrating MediaView at SIGGRAPH, but there was a sneak preview in Los Alamos this past tuesday. Richard takes the idea of multi-media first created by HyperCard for the Mac, and redefines the concept. Instead of the concept of 'cards' he uses the standard 'document' metaphor. This frees up the user of a multi-media document from the one programmed way of navigating as in HyperCard. The user is instead allowed to move through the document freely and explore as they need. There is a browser formatted similar to the NeXT mail application to help navigate MediaView, it has the utility icons at the top, then a list of currently opened Media documents and then below that, the actual document. He introduces non-text media by means of tab-buttons in the upper right hand of the Media browser. There are three standard Media tabs, but the user can define and use infinite other Media tabs. This is where MediaView gets its power. The demonstration showed tabs that held live video, live equations, sound linked to live video, graphics linked to video linked to sound, sliders linked to graphics allowing for free rotation. The possibilities are endless. Careful attention was paid to make sure that the cut and paste utilities were supported fully. A cut live video object with embedded sound maintained all its attributes when pasted. This program may eventually cause the death of standard text books because of its versatility and sheer power to educate by interaction.

General Interest:

I have learned a great deal in the past week about the NeXT tech support. I had a hard drive failer. I believe that the NeXT ROM Monitor called it an 'Exception #4'. I tried to call NeXT directly and to my surprise I could not be transferred to a tech representative. I either had to be a developer, Campus Consultant, or other important member of the NeXT community. They referred me to the place I purchased my computer. So I called Charlie Lutz. He had no information on such an error. If I had purchased my NeXT through Business Land, how willing do you think they would have been to help me? I finally had Paul Clark call NeXT tech support and I spoke with a nice lady until we determined that my drive was dead. She then sent me a new drive FedEx over night to be installed by a Motorola representative. This was great, I received the drive and I am back up and running. NeXT prides itself on its flawless products. I still believe that all NeXT owners should be able to access the wealth of information at NeXT Tech Support. About flawless products, I am writing this NuG on a monitor that is on its way to the grave, and i have had it for less than a month. Has anyone else had a slight shimmering of the entire screen? Well I am glad that I now have a friend at NeXT that doesn't mind if I call for Tech support. We will see if I have a new monitor before long.

Thanks for the time,
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