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White Paper

on

Electronic Publishing

and

SOS Help! Info-Author

Winner of a Gold Award from PC User Magazine, May 1995.

by

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Electronic Publishing in Business

In today's rapidly changing business environment, companies have to react quickly and efficiently to a changing world. Never has the old adage "Time is money" been more true.

Electronic publishing is the latest method of increasing efficiency in business.

Electronic documents have several advantages over conventional paper based ones. Their flexibility allows minor changes to be made to a document or help file easily. The new document can then be distributed quickly and efficiently throughout the work place or even multiple sites throughout the world. This leads to reduced costs in terms of printing, paper, postage and administration.

For example with on-line manuals and help files, employees have expert help at their fingertips. Money is saved in training, and productivity is increased as users no longer have to call a Help Desk (or more usually a neighbouring colleague). Using an on-line tutorial frees technical staff for other things as users can now learn about the product's features as and when they need them.

When used for "Standalone" Help files, information can be changed instantaneously and distributed to clients or colleagues with no reprint costs, no administration costs, and no postal delays. For example with price lists, parts lists, and even all documentation for the **ISO 9000** Standard.

Finally, with more companies using the Internet, electronic publishing is being used to design World Wide Web sites and pages and access the information they contain.

Summary Of Benefits

- **Efficiency** - employees have information at their fingertips, saving time and therefore money
- **Flexibility** - changes can be made quickly and easily
- **Distribution** - information quickly dispersed throughout a company or to clients
- **Reduced Costs** - in terms of printing, administration and training

The technology and software to implement these new ideas has been limited and required users with a high degree of technical expertise...until now.

*Introducing **SOS Help! Info-Author** ...*

SOS Help! Info-Author

Gold Award Winner, PC User Magazine issue 17-30 May, 1995

SOS Help! Info-Author is the new electronic publishing tool that no modern business should be without. As a true WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) program, its ease of use makes it possible for users with no technical knowledge to create professional looking electronic documents in only a matter of hours, whilst its advanced tools allow power users to create complex multi-level help documents with ease. This means that those with more technical knowledge are free to do other tasks whilst text and data entry can be done by less technically trained team members, increasing productivity and saving time and money.

"This Gold Award winner is ideal for development teams which need to create Help files quickly... It can boost productivity and save many hours of debugging", PC User Magazine, May 1995.

SOS Help Info-Author requires Windows 3.1 or later to run and, because it creates all the files needed by the help compiler, a Rich Text Format editor (such as Word) is redundant.

It is so flexible that it can be used for such diverse tasks as creating parts lists, electronic magazines, client directories, reference manuals and of course on-line help files for applications. It can also be used in conjunction with the ProPack (see later) for converting Help files to HTML and back again which is used for designing World Wide Web pages for the Internet etc.

Files created using SOS Help! Info-Author are displayed using the Windows WinHelp engine. SOS Help! Info-Author closely mimics the behaviour of WinHelp; the help text, bitmaps, jumps etc. are entered exactly as the end user will see them, without having to compile the project into a .HLP file.

Summary of benefits

- **WYSIWYG** - always see the document or help file as the user will see it
- **Powerful** - SOS Help! Info-Author fully supports all existing WinHelp features letting you create Context Sensitive Help effortlessly
- **Quick** - no need to compile the help file to see the effect of minor changes
- **Simple** - Its ease of use allows **anyone** to complete professional looking documents easily, freeing up more experienced staff for other tasks
- **Multimedia friendly** - allows Full Motion Video (FMV) clips and sound to be included in a document or help file (an external DLL is required)
- **Complete** - all the tools required to complete a project are included (e.g. Help Compiler, Segmented Hypergraphics editor and Multi Resolution Bitmap Compiler etc.)
- **Productivity and Profits** - all the above benefits lead directly to savings in time and training expenses
- **HTML Conversion** - used to create Web pages - only in conjunction with the ProPack (see Later)

GENERAL FEATURES

Topic Editor

- Simple “point and shoot” interface allows the user to quickly create a topic, and then add links to other topics as required
- Full support for all the text formatting features used by Windows Help
- Cut and paste between topics or even between projects
- Supports style sheets so that a house style can be designed and used for any Windows Help project
- Insert pictures (Windows metafiles, bitmaps and segmented hypergraphics created with the supplied hot spot editor **SHED.EXE**)
- Add jumps, popups and Windows Help macros from words, phrases or even pictures
- Integrated **Spell Checker** allows you to correct spelling mistakes on the fly
- Create Browse Orders and attach Keywords to a topic to guide users through the document

Links

- Creates and displays all links pointing to a topic
- Execute WinHelp Macros from a hypertext link (hotspot or jump)
- Links not limited to text, jumps from pictures, icons, buttons, or even empty space are easy to create

Style and Style Sheets

- Create project specific Style Sheets containing all the styles needed
- Format text in an instant using a style
- Full support for text formatting and editing features

Generating the Help File

- Generate and test your Windows Help file without leaving SOS Help! Info-Author
- Define the first topic to be displayed (usually but not necessarily the contents page)
- View any compiler error messages inside SOS Help! Info-Author

Button Pad

- Appears beneath the mouse cursor when the right mouse button is pressed
- Contains the 20 most useful features of SOS Help! Info-Author (e.g. create Links, Non-Scrolling regions or new Styles at the click of a button)
- Dramatically speeds up the editing and formatting of text

ADVANCED FEATURES

Importing and Exporting

- Import the RTF files of existing Help projects (perhaps created using other methods or products)
- Import Norton Guides or even text files (e.g. letters and other word processor documents)
- Export projects as a SOS Help! Info-Author Project file (.SHP) for easy transfer to other users, and for backup and/or version control systems etc. (this file format is documented)
- Merge two or more projects together using the SOS Help! Info-Author Text file format (.SHT - again documented)

Help Tracker

- Allows the Project Leader to track the progress of larger, multi-level projects - essential when several authors work on the same project
- Tracks who the last person was to edit a topic, as well as detailing what still needs to be done
- View your project in several ways by applying the appropriate Filter
- when combined with importing **.SHT** files it is possible for several authors to work on the same project and for the Project Leader to co-ordinate and compile the complete project

Team Support

- Use development teams to create electronic documents with SOS Help! Info-Author
- Each team member creates their section of the help file then exports it as an **.SHT**
- The Project Leader imports these **.SHT** files into the complete project, overwriting the existing files
- The Project Leader then uses Help Tracker to monitor the project's progress
- Allows text and data to be entered by lesser skilled staff, freeing up your skilled staff and making for more efficient use of human resources
- **N.B.** a multi-user site license is required (see Publisher section for more details)

Multimedia

- Allows the insertion of Full Motion Video (FMV) clips and Sound files allowing full multimedia documents and Help files to be created
- External DLL is required (included with Microsoft's Multimedia SDK or from other third parties)

Miscellaneous

- **Build Tags** - determine which topics to include in the **.HLP** file (controlled by the Build Condition) by attaching Build Tags to topics; these can be used for several different version of the same help files (i.e. retail vs. wholesale price lists)
- **Aliases** - allow a different topic to be displayed to the one called by a hypertext link, and are often used in conjunction with Build Tags
- **Baggage Files** - place other files inside your help file (requires an external DLL to extract them, which is not supplied)
- **WinHelp** - fully supports all WinHelp features

Creating Context Sensitive Help

- SOS Help! Info-Author can be run as a normal Windows program or within an application using the supplied API. It works with any Windows development language and any application which supports external Dynamic Linked Libraries (.DLLs)
- SOS Help! Info-Author is supplied with a programming API (source code included).
- Developers make calls to SOSHELP() rather than WINHELP() so that when context sensitive help is required in an application, SOS Help! Info-Author automatically creates (or loads) the topic with the correct Context Identifier and Value

INCLUDED UTILITIES

Also included with SOS Help! Info-Author are the following programs and utilities

- **SOS Help! Sprocket** utility - for more details see below
- **Snapshot 2** - a shareware screen grabber
- **Microsoft Windows Help Compiler**
- **Microsoft Segmented Hypergraphics Editor (SHED.EXE)**
- **Microsoft Multi Resolution Bitmap Compiler**

SOS Help! Sprocket

- A Limpet utility that attaches itself to the title bar of the active application
- It allows you to launch a program or help file (including those not created by SOS Help! Info-Author) without using Program Manager
- It is completely user definable and can launch any program, utility, or Help file you want
- On registration of SOS Help! Info-Author your personal copy of the Sprocket utility will be sent out for FREE (an additional license is required if you want to distribute SOS Help! Sprocket to your users)
- Alternatively see the Lamaura World Wide Web section below for information on how to receive this software for FREE

Snapshot 2

- This is a shareware screen grabber used to take pictures of areas of the screen
- Attaches to the right mouse button

Microsoft Segmented Hypergraphics Editor (SHED.EXE)

- Allows you to attach "Hotspots" to the bitmaps etc. that you may have captured using Snapshot 2

ADDED EXTRAS

SOS Help! Info-Author ProPack

SOS Help! Info-Author ProPack adds extra features to SOS Help! Info-Author, some of which are listed below

- Creates a multi-level Table of Contents page automatically (based on browse orders) and allows items to be placed/moved within this page
- Allows global spell checking and global find and replace for all topics in a project
- Allows the same keywords (topic search strings) to be entered for several topics at the same time
- **Web Page Authoring** - Converts HTML documents to and **from** WinHelp projects. This brings the user friendliness of SOS Help! Info-Author to the creation of WWW pages.

SOS Help! Info-Author ProPack will ship during the 3rd quarter of 1995 (price to be announced).

Purchasing Details

US/Canada

Retail price: US\$295.00 + Shipping + VAT

Special Offer: US\$149.00 + Shipping + VAT

International

Retail price: £195.00 + Shipping + VAT

Special Offer: £ 99.00 + Shipping + VAT

The special off price is valid to August 31st, 1995

Value For Money

- Some people seem to think that the more expensive software is the better it must be; this is not so - you don't get Gold Awards from PC User Magazine for nothing
- SOS Help! Info-Author does the job it was designed for better than some other Help design tools costing twice its price
- SOS Help! is so intuitive and flexible to work with that it can be used by people with no technical knowledge, as well as consultants and experts.
- It is priced to be attractive to users in the SOHO market (Small Office, Home Office), as well as large corporations with huge development budgets

Lamaura World Wide Web site and FREE Software

You can have a look at the Lamaura WWW site at <http://www.lamaura.com/~lamaura> (the "~" is a tilde character, not a hyphen)

This site contains information on all Lamaura products, a means of registering Lamaura products on-line and a competition allowing you to win a FREE copy of SOS Help! Sprocket.

Publisher

If you have any questions or would like more information on SOS Help! Info-Author please contact Lamaura Development Ltd whose address is below. Please note that the preferred method of contact is by email, followed by fax and telephone.

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