

Apple continues to evolve its print driver software. Although QuickDraw GX appears moribund, the company uploaded scads of international language versions of QuickDraw GX 1.1.3 to its software sites last month. And, last week it brought out a minor update to LaserWriter 8.3.4 (see HotBits for June 14: "LaserWriter 8.3.4 fixes for Power Macs and networks").

But the real news is the imminent release of LaserWriter 8.4. The new software is already shipping with Apple's recently announced 12/640PS printer (see HotBits for June 14: "Apple's new LaserWriter 12/640PS offers Duplex option") and should be available generally in the next couple of weeks.

LaserWriter 8.4 is a substantial update and includes many long requested and anticipated features which offer better performance.

For starters, the new LaserWriter driver is Power Mac native (it also runs on 68K machines). This alone is a big improvement.

Another major requested feature is the move back to single-pass printing for foreground print jobs like LaserWriter 7. Many service bureaus and prepress houses continued to use the version 7 driver long after the introduction of LaserWriter 8 because of the performance hit taken by this extra spooling. Now they can finally enjoy the benefits of LaserWriter 8 with its new single-pass foreground printing.

The Control Strip Printer Selector module (far right)

LaserWriter 8.4 has been rewritten to provide a more convenient interface. The new Printer Selector Control Strip Module (pictured above) is only the tip of the iceberg. It is installed only on computers that are already using the Apple's Control Strip.

A Desktop Printer menu extension can be installed using the Custom Install option.

The Desktop Printer menu appears on the right-hand side of your menu bar to the immediate left of the Apple Guide menu. The Desktop Printer menu lists the names of all active desktop printers. A check mark is displayed next to the name of the default printer. Selecting the name of a printer from this list makes the printer the new default.

n Laser Writer 8.4 all the Page Setup and Print Dialog boxes have been reorganized in a spacious and airy manor with pop-up menus galore. Along with the new Control Strip Module users will find a new hierarchical folder in the Apple menu called Desktop Printers where they can select a printer.

Needless to say, Desktop Printing is an automatic part of the installation. And Desktop Printing also gets convenience improvements. The Print Queue window (see illustration above), now has buttons to hold selected items, release selected items, set the time of selected items, and remove selected items from the queue.

Background printing options from the Print dialog box

The Read Me notes for the new software include this memorable caveat: Open Transport users should upgrade to version 1.1.1. We have no information on when O.T. 1.1.1 will be available but Apple suggests you watch these sites:

Apple Software Updates are available on AppleLink, CompuServe, and America Online, and Apple Software Updates on the Internet at:

US, WWW site: <http://www.support.apple.com>
S, WWW site: <http://www.info.apple.com>
S, FTP site: <ftp://ftp.support.apple.com>
S, FTP site: <ftp://ftp.info.apple.com>
urope, FTP site: <ftp://ftp.info.euro.apple.com>

— Alex Narvey

verybody's favorite customization tool, the venerable ResEdit, will be getting a major retooling for System 8. Here is a MacSense preview:

The current ResEdit program 2.1.3 will not run under System 8 at all. ResEdit 3 is being developed as a replacement and it will run on all 68K and PowerPC Macs under both System 7 and 8.

The new ResEdit will sport a drag and drop interface and an extensible plug-in architecture with scripting capabilities. It will be able to edit existing System resources as well as System 8 System resources.

It will also be able to edit the Data Fork of files. (Prior to version 3, ResEdit only worked on the Resource Fork of files—a separate editor like Norton Disk Editor has been required for the Data Fork portion of files).

An preview of ResEdit 3 was shown at the WWDC conference in May. There is no word on the expected delivery date of a final release but it is likely to be available before System 8. (which is expected in Summer '97).

— Alex Narvey

three major upgrades in one year? It seems as if Netscape—the Internet synonym for steamroller—is set to do just that. After delivering version 2.0 early this year and recently introducing a new beta version 5 of Navigator 3.0, the company has plans to deliver a Netscape 4.0 possibly before year end!

Word about Netscape 4 has begun to leak out at Browser Watch (www.browserwatch.com). According to information posted by Cabel Sasser on June 14, a careful reading of the Netscape vision white paper reveals plans for "Galileo"—the codename for Netscape Navigator 4.0.

Navigator 4 is apparently slated to get automatic plug-in installation and other unspecified interface convenience improvements.

Java will support will be beefed up with bonus class libraries and "trusted" applets will be able to "spew" on the users hard drive or connect to other servers. (No word on RAM requirements).

HTML will gain support for 3D Layered Frames and Font selection and HTML creation will be bolstered with clip art and a graphics editor, style sheets, JavaScript objects, a graphics editor, a helpful wizard, and file conversion tools.

Email will be enhanced with a drag and drop interface that supports WYSIWIG HTML editing, email filtering, searching capabilities, IMAP support, and S/MIME support for encrypted mail.

When can you get all this? Your guess is as good as ours. But Navigator 3.0b5 should be available by the time you read this.

— Alex Narvey