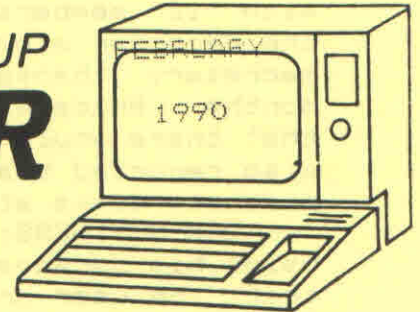


CEDAR VALLEY 99'ER USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER



CEDAR RAPIDS/MARION, IOWA

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****NEWSLETTER TOPICS****

1. Future Meeting Dates
2. Next Meeting Notes
3. Minutes from the January Mtg
4. Elections are Upon Us
5. CHECKS-OUT, a Review
6. More For Sale Items
7. RAG-WRITER, a Review (reprint)

****FUTURE MEETING DATES****

Please mark the following dates on your calendar for future meetings:
FEBRUARY 12, MARCH 12, APRIL 9.

*****NEXT MEETING*****

The regular monthly meeting will be Monday, February 12, at West Music, Cedar Rapids, with open discussion starting at 6:30 PM. Ed Edwards will demo use of your modem with Telco and a BBS, through the magic of video. Door prizes for all--a sample Disk Of the Month!

* MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY MEETING *

The January meeting was called to order by President Jerry Canady with 12 members in attendance. It was moved, seconded and passed that the December minutes be accepted as printed in the NEWSLETTER. The secretary thanked Bob Wahlstrom for his fine substitution these past two months. Bruce Winters reported that the user group is "in the black" but that there would be no formal treasurer report due to the holiday. Bruce also reported that the new supply of disks is available; see Bruce to purchase disks at the group's discount price.

OLD BUSINESS: 1. John Johnson commented that the user group is still using his personal copy of Rapid Copy. It was moved, seconded and passed that the user group purchase a copy. 2. John reported that the Disk of the Month project is not ready yet. He will continue to work on it.

NEW BUSINESS: There was none for discussion.

DISCUSSION: 1. Gary Bishop announced that the for sale items listed in the last NEWSLETTER were available at the meeting. 2. Jerry said he is in communication with a user group member who now lives in Dallas. This member would like to obtain a console replacement. See Jerry for more info.

PROGRAM: Ed Edwards had the program for the evening. He continued his TIPS discussion started last month.

*will money order - ask Jerry
Louie Honalike
newspaper*

Submitted by Bill Faeth, Secretary

ELECTIONS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER

The Cedar Valley 99'er User Group is about to reach a new milestone: the beginning of our ninth year! During the past eight years, we have had only three presidents and only four or five different mixes of officers. Our officers, combined with the appointed/volunteer chairpersons, are what keep our group operating every year. And, of course, the more people who participate, the easier each job becomes!

I am leading up to the fact that our annual ELECTION OF OFFICERS is coming up in March, and it is time for a little soul searching. Those who are or have been officers are in some cases ready to hand over the reins to some new blood; others are willing to continue in their current roles. Those of us who have not yet had the opportunity to be an officer need to step forward this year and take their turn.

Jerry will be appointing a Nominations Committee at the next meeting; they will be responsible for creating a slate of officer candidates for us to vote on in March. When you are asked to help our group survive our ninth year (yes, I believe that we are in a survival mode!), please say YES! We need everyone to participate in some capacity, and then the individual jobs become small.

Let's not wait for Someone Else to do the work; that person never shows up at the meetings!

Jim Green

*** CHECKS-OUT, a Review ***

I've come across one of the handiest programs, and I'd like to share my opinions about it. It is called "CHECKS-OUT" by Wesley R. Richardson, from the Northcoast 99ers of Cleveland, OH. This neat program requests your current bank balance, such as from an automatic teller machine, and your present checkbook balance. You then enter all of the checks that may not have cleared the bank, and the program finds all combinations of checks that equals the difference between your checkbook and the bank's balance. The program may find more than one combination, and lists all possible combinations. This will allow you to determine which checks haven't caught up yet at the bank.

I request a balance every day from the teller machine, and keep track of which checks are clearing on a day-by-day basis. To obtain the correct starting point, I request a balance daily from the last time I reconciled my checkbook with the bank statement, and then apply the program to each daily balance. This tells me which checks clear on each day between the date of the bank statement, and my receipt of the statement in the mail. Once I catch up with the 10 day or so lag, the program easily keeps track of all outstanding checks.

I am a die-hard tinkerer, but I have only added one line to Wesley's program, and that is to prevent messing up his very orderly screen if you accidentally press the ENTER key in response to a value. Xbasic would honk its warning, and give you another chance to input the value, but in the mean time, messed up the screen with its warning message. A simple "ON WARNING NEXT" line fixed this. Wes even flashes a small symbol on the screen made from his initials to indicate the program is working. All in all, a very slick program. I found it in one of the user group newsletters, and typed in the program and DOC file. I will bring them to the next meeting to give to our librarian.

-Gary D. Bishop

*** MORE FOR SALE ITEMS ***

The hardware and software items listed on the next page are available from a former member of ours, Jim Bishop. He writes:

"I would appreciate it if you could place this listing of merchandise that I am selling in the next newsletter. You may also add that all prices are subject to negotiations. People interested may get in contact with me at 393-6172 any night of the week. Although I do work on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, my parents will be home to leave me a message, or I have an answering machine that is on all the time. If you need any further information please call me. Thank you."

You may also write to Jim at 1716 Texas Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402.

Merchandise	Selling Price	Retail Price
1 complete unit	\$400.00	
Keyboard		
Monitor		
Perphial Expansion		
Singal disk drive.		
32K memory		
Disk controller card		
RS232		
(includes printer cable		
compatable with STAR		
printers)		
15 blank disks		
TI99/4A computer	\$50.00	
Speech Synthesizer	\$15.00	\$39.95
Super Skeetch	\$20.00	\$39.95
Panasonic Program	\$20.00	\$39.95
Recorder		
Software		

Parsec	\$3.00	\$5.95
Munchman	\$3.00	\$5.95
TI Invaders	\$3.00	\$5.95
Home Budget	\$3.00	\$5.95
Adventure	\$7.00	\$9.95
(cartridge & cassette)		
The Count(cas)	\$4.00	\$7.95
Mystery Fun House(cas)	\$4.00	\$7.95
Pyramid of Doom(cas)	\$4.00	\$7.95
Voodoo Castle(cas)	\$4.00	\$7.95
Package Deal		
Hitchhiker's Guide	\$10.00	\$14.95
to the Galaxy		
Centipede	\$4.00	\$7.95
Miner 2049er	\$4.00	
Tunnels of Doom	\$7.00	\$9.95
(cartridge & cassette)		
Microsoft Multiplan	\$13.00	\$19.95
TI Writer	\$13.00	\$19.95
Terminal Emulator II	\$13.00	\$19.95
Disk Manager IV	\$6.00	
TI Extended Basic	\$13.00	\$19.95
The Attack	\$3.00	\$5.95
Wizard's Lair(disk)	\$10.00	\$14.95
TI99/4A 24 Basic Programs	\$3.00	\$5.95
(Book & cassette)		
Entertainment Games in	\$3.00	\$5.95
TI Basic and Extended		
Basic(book & cassette)		
Teach Yourself Basic	\$3.00	\$6.95
(2 cassettes only)		
Best of 99er	\$5.00	\$9.95
(Book only)		
TI99/4A User's Guide	\$3.00	
(Book only)		

NEWS OF THE LIBRARY

Another improved version of TI-Writer has come on the scene, RAG SOFTWARE's RAG-Writer; it's a fairware program written by R A Green. We acquired a copy of version 4.2 at the TI-FAIR in Chicago last month. There is a version 4.4 available from the author; he's asking \$10. (Address: R A Green, 1032 Chantenay Drive, Gloucester Ontario, K1C 2K9)

The package contains an XBasic LOAD which provides a menu for Editor and Formatter; it can be customized easily to accommodate other programs which you might put on the disk. (A 'barebones' working copy of RAG-Writer's load, editor and formatter files occupies only 81 sectors, so there's room for other things on even a SSSD disk.) Loaders are also provided for those who prefer an E/A, Minimem or Supercart environment. There are two character set files, a demonstration file, four document files (a total of about 9 pages) and three short programs used to 'install' (configure) the editor and formatter.

The Editor's defaults are white on blue, wordwrap on, line-numbers on, margins at 0 and 79. If these don't suit you, they can be altered and saved so that your personal choices always come up when the Editor is loaded. You can also change 'PIO' to 'PIO.CR' or whatever else your printer needs, and have your preferred margins, indent and tabs available automatically. But the name of the output-device and the margins, indent and tabs can be over-ridden instantly, if need be, in the way we've always done.

To customize your working copy, just press 'CLEAR' (Fctn-4), then RUN "DSK1.INLOAD". A menu here accesses both EDITINST and FORMINST, the configuration programs for the Editor and Formatter. You'll not believe how easy it is to use them.

The Editor loads from XBasic in about 15 seconds, a bit quicker than for FUNNELWEB. Both versions of the Editor take 45 seconds to read a 441-line D/V 80 text file. Both require 45 seconds to skim from the top to the bottom of that file using Ctrl-X ('down arrow').

The surprises come in the speed of the RAG-Editor's MOVE, COPY and DELETE operations. To MOVE lines 1-400 to 'after 441' takes 6 seconds for RAG-Editor, 80 seconds for TIW's Editor. To COPY lines 1-400 to 'after 441' is instantaneous for RAG-Editor, and takes 5 seconds for TIW's Editor. To DELETE the first 410 lines is instantaneous for RAG-Editor, but takes 30 seconds for TIW's Editor. Now I begin to understand why one newsletter reviewer said that "when you just want to get there, get the job done, and get out, then this is the way to go."

Here are the new features that make things easier and faster than TI's original Editor. None of the features of the original have been lost; old and new are completely compatible.

a) A new command, QQ (for Quick Quit) puts you out to the color-bar screen immediately; but Q (Quit) gives you the usual Purge, Save and Exit options.

b) A number entered on the command line calls up that line to the top of the screen, followed, of course, by the next 23 lines of the file.

c) Ctrl-, and Ctrl-. (entered in Edit mode, as if a text character) take you, respectively, to the top and the bottom of the file.

d) When in Command mode, pressing ENTER takes you directly to Edit mode.

The Formatter has also been improved in several ways that make it a pleasure to use:

e) It is now possible to give the response 'L' (for Letterhead) at the question 'Pause at end of page?'. The author explains: "The response 'L' indicates that the formatter is to pause at the end of each page and that the normal spacing at the top of the page is not to be done so that letterhead paper can be positioned in the printer at the correct place for the first line of text to be printed. The formatter normally prints two blank lines, the HE [header] line and another blank line at the top of the page. None of these will be printed when the 'L' response is used, but the line number will still be set to five."

I tried it, using as data a single line of dashes and for each test placed the paper fold at the tear-bar of my NX-10 printer. When either of the options 'N' or 'Y' was used, the line was printed 1-1/2 inches from the top of the paper; when the 'L' option was used, the line was printed half an inch higher. (For comparison, FUNNELWEB's formatter printed at 1-1/2 inches.) Here at last is a programmed cure for the printing of 4 blank lines ahead of the first line of text!

f) A pair of flaws has been cured; one is the two-asterisk problem mentioned a few months ago in this column, which arises from the use of two asterisks and a number as a signal to provide 'alternate input' for mailing list applications. The other problem is an obscure difficulty of printing the '@' sign in a centered line. (The file BUGDEMO illustrates these cures.)

(I am chagrined to discover my ignorance of the fact that the two-asterisk problem has been cured in the most recent releases of FUNNELWEB, although present at least as late as version 4.0.)

g) The disk number in the filenames of supporting files used by .IF (Include File), .ML (Mailing List) and .CH (Chain files, a new formatter command) can be specified by an asterisk, to indicate that the same drive is to be used as that used for the main input file. Provided that all the files can be accommodated on a single disk, a document can be printed from any drive chosen by the user.

There are eight new Formatter commands:

h) Four of them allow you to redefine the control characters used to specify underscoring, boldface, required-blank and mailing-list alternate input. Default values are, as in the original Editor, respectively, the '&', '@', '^' and '*'.

i) 'PC' (Printer Control) is a new formatter command used to send control characters to the printer as an alternative to the transliterate ('.TL') command. '.TL' can, of course, still be used, as can the codes described in the TIW manual (pp 98 and 146) as 'special character mode'. (Some of the special character mode commands caused the printing of extraneous characters.)

j) **'AI'** (As Is) is similar to **'NF'** (No Fill), except that the left margin is still observed.

k) **'CP n'** (Conditional Page eject) will cause an end-of-page break if there are fewer than 'n' blank lines remaining on the current page. One use--place it just before a table, with 'n' equal to the number of lines in the table; this insures that the entire table is printed on one page.

l) The eighth of the new Formatter commands is **'CH filename'**; when this is encountered, the main input file is closed and the user is prompted to insert the disk which contains the named file. This allows the processing of a document of unlimited length.

With so many new and useful commands, it's obvious that many text files prepared for the new Formatter won't be compatible with the old one.

There is one flaw in the Formatter that wouldn't be important to most of us, but it will be remedied no doubt. When using the mail-list feature one must use a value-file to supply the addresses and personalized information, for the computer locks up after data is entered from the keyboard.

Most (perhaps all) of our members now use FUNNELWEB, so it's natural to ask what one might give up in using RAG-Writer. So far as the Formatter is concerned, there's nothing to lose, and a great deal to gain, unless you're using the mail-list feature. (Even there the Formatter is OK so long as a value-file is being used. We have Steve Tuorto's VAL-WRITE utility to simplify that chore.)

None of the features of the Formatter are incompatible with any version of the Editor, so one can use whichever of the Editors suits your fancy, or gives you an advantage that is important. Some of us will probably use both, depending upon the application. Choosing RAG-Editor sacrifices some cherished features of the FUNNELWEB Editor:

1) All of the 'extras' of the catalog--the ability to mark a file for loading, to view and delete files, to recognize fractured files, etc. RAG-Writer provides a perfectly acceptable directory with no extras.

2) The ability to change case by the use of Ctrl-; and Ctrl-.

3) The loaders and menus which make it possible to load assembly-language programs. Those who prefer the E/A environment may be able to adapt the RAG-Loader to do some of this; the documents say so, but I haven't explored it.

4) The tailing ruler which makes centering and alignment easy. But it's easy to prepare a substitute which you can merge temporarily to of your file.

Will I use RAG-WRITER? Certainly, when I need right-justified text, enlarged print, or other items best done with the formatter. I almost never have used the TIW formatter as we have previously known it, because of some of its annoying habits. But RAG-Formatter doesn't intimidate me--well, maybe a little--and I welcome the chance to print out some document files I'd given up on because of the repeated page over-runs, blank pages, etc. And I most certainly will take advantage of the speed of the RAG-Editor for at least one application that requires moving and deleting large blocks of lines.

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

6:30 PM --- WEST MUSIC COMPANY

DEMONSTRATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

IN REAL TIME VIA VIDEO!

ALSO, FREE D.O.M. FOR ALL ATTENDEES

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