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LONGVIEW COMPUTER USERS GROUP

P. O. BOX 9284 , LONGVIEW, TEXAS 75608

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by
Ray Coates

A lot has happened this month. As y'all know, we've had some projects we've wanted to work on, but we lacked the volunteers. Well, thanks to a couple of volunteers, those projects are now being worked on.

One project was to contact folks that do not renew their membership, to determine why not. There could be a variety of reasons but if one or two reasons show up consistently, we need to analyze those reasons to see if there is anything we as a club should address and/or correct. In order to get this data we are going back to September 1989. We will call each person who has let his or her membership expire since then to try and find out why. Once that project has been completed we will continue to call folks who have not renewed their membership after two months, to remind them that their membership has expired, to see if they want to renew, and if not, why not? Hopefully this project will reveal some areas where we need improvement.

Along these same lines, we are approaching a group of retired executives to take a look at us and to identify areas of improvement. Hopefully they will not just present us with problems, but will also have some suggestions for improvement.

Another project that is being worked on is to find an IBM SIG Chairman. One of our club members has volunteered to call all of the IBM members, to discuss with them the qualifications that I feel are necessary for being a SIG Chairman, and to ask if they will consider being the IBM SIG Chairman. Here are those qualifications: First, you don't need to know all there is to know about DOS or programming. Second, you don't need to be a great teacher or public speaker. Third, some of our best chairmen have been those who work behind the scene. Then, you do need to have a desire to see our club grow, some organizational skills, and the ability to make folks feel at home. The main thing we are trying to do right now in the IBM SIG is to get our DOS training going again. Basically, we need to sit down and decide what levels of training we want to have, which DOS commands will be taught in each level of training, who will teach the classes, and get the information to the public through the TV and newspaper. Some of this work has already been done. We need someone to pick up the ball and follow through with the program. When the training begins, the SIG Chairman's job will be fairly simple: just make sure the instructors know they have a class to teach each month and that they will be there to teach their class or that they have a substitute. To do this you wouldn't even have to be an IBM'er. We need someone to organize it, to get it started up again, and to monitor its progress. Of course, if this person wanted to be more active, say as a DOS instructor, obviously that would be alright, too.

Another order of business has been taken care of by the Nominating Committee. When they talked with me about serving again as the club president, my initial response was "No." I don't feel it would be appropriate to express why, but I will say that after they presented me

TI Report

by
Leo DuBry

The world of TI/99 is so large that it is impossible to tell about it in these little articles. I have mentioned before about a disk of information I received from Mr. Jim Peterson. He has an organization which is called TIGERCUB, and it is for the benefit of the TI/99 community. What I wanted to inform you about is what he has accumulated for his library. There are over 4,000 programs in his collection. He has gone through and weeded out the disks that are duplicates and those that do not function properly. Yes, he has over 4,000 left. Then, he divided them into groups and placed them on disks by their subjects. Now, there are over 300 and all are available to the TI/99 community. Both the Librarians in Tyler and Longview have copies of the listings and will be ordering some to fill out our collections. In going over part of the list here is what I found. There are 120 copywrited programs at one dollar each. Full disks of freeware and public domain at five dollars a disk. There are twelve music disks at \$1.50 each. There are eleven disks on miscellaneous subjects, five on home utilities, five on drawing, two on check books, and the list seems to go on forever. Each one of these disks has a number of programs on it. If a person wanted to work on his check book there are over a dozen programs to help him find out that the bank is probably right. The disk includes seven programs about education and games. There is a spelling program that flashes a word on the screen for about a tenth of a second; then a person has to enter the spelling of the word. The computer loves to show it is superior to a mind like mine. Next, there is a disk about Nutrition which calls for the desired calories in a serving of food. It asks for the ingredients according to the information on the packaging. Then it gives the amount of fat and other information that a Nutritionist would give you. This would be big help for those who worry about their diet.

These programs are available to any one with a TI/99 system. They do require an expansion box with disk drive and an extended BASIC cartridge to use the programs. For the person who would like to expand his computer system there are companies that furnish these pieces of hardware. Yes, today there is more for the TI/99 than when TI stopped manufacturing the units.

For anyone interested in gaining a better knowledge about the TI/99, come to the TI SIG next meeting. Also, I would like to invite all the people who changed computers, but still have their TI/99 units to the meetings. Beware -- we might try to convert you back.

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TI REPORT

By Leo W DuBry

According to the calendar Wednesday is the first day of Spring, and the weather man says there is going to be a hard frost to usher in the event. Now, if you believe what the weather people say, you probably believe anything, so I will tell you what is new in the world of TI/99.

According to the users group in Tyler this month's program at Dallas was given by Charles Good. He presented a program called XHi which enables a person with a TI/99 and either the DIJIT systems, AVPC card, or the Mechatronics 80 column card in his Expansion Box to download IBM graphic files from bulletin boards, display them on the monitor, save them on floppy disks, alter the files, and print the pictures with a printer. According to this person, the program uses abilities that were built into the TI99 that TI never let the people know was there. He used a large monitor and the graphics were equal to those produced by other computers.

There is an article in this month's MICROpendium by this same person. According to the article, someone in West Germany developed this program for the TI/99.

An article in this month's "Answer and Question" of the MICROpendium covered a problem that I have been having. The TI99, like all computers, will lock up when worked especially hard.

A heavily used cartridge, called TI Extended Basis, is one that does this quite often. The author stated that he is an electronic repair man. He has found that heat would tie up computer chips. He told how he had taken the cartridge apart and drilled a grid of sixty small holes in the case. This allows the heat to escape the cartridge and the chip will not over heat. Since I have had this problem, my Extended Basic now has a grid of sixty small vent holes in its case. When you come to the next TI SIG meeting, I will show you how do this to your cartridge.

If you have a IBM compatible along with your TI/99 and wish to exchange files, you're in luck. Come to the SIG meeting and we can point you in the proper direction so that you can accomplish this. Also we can show you where to acquire both hard and software for your machine. There is very little that can not be accomplished with the TI and at a fraction of the cost of other computers.

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IBM

from -32,768 to +32,767. Short integers occupy four bytes of storage and span the range from -2,147,483,648 to +2,147,483,647. Long integers require 8 bytes and can hold values so large that you'll probably never need them in integer format.

Reels account for another three of the seven 80x87 data types. They conform to the IEEE format for representation of floating-point numbers, and they come in three varieties: short, long, and temporary. The difference between short and long reels is that short reels require 32 bits for storage while long reels require 64. Short reels can be used to represent numbers (positive and negative) as small as $10E-37$ and as large as $10E+38$. Long reels can hold values ranging from $10E-307$ to $10E+308$. Temporary reels are 80 bits long and exist only inside the 80x87.

The final data type, packed decimal, provides a means for storing integers in a COBOL-compatible 80-bit binary format. The lower 72 bits contain 18 sets of 4 bits that each hold a binary value from 0 to 9 representing one decimal digit. Bit 79 (the highest bit) holds the sign. Bits 72 to 78 are unused.

The ability to deal with a variety of data types isn't the only advantage the NDP offers over standard CPUs. One of its primary benefits is that its instruction set is optimized for number crunching. Not only can many operations be performed with a single instruction (making them much easier to code), they're performed fast, consuming far fewer clock cycles than would equivalent routines coded on a conventional CPU. The FPATAN instruction, for example, calculates the arctangent of an angle. The equivalent routine coded for the CPU would be hundreds or perhaps thousands of lines long. In addition, a number of commonly used mathematical constants such as the value of pi are built in.

AutoCAD is one of the very few application programs that require a coprocessor. Its operations are so math-intensive that without help from a specialized floating-point unit, its speed would be so inhibited that its benefits would be marginal.

Those of you who would like significantly more detail on the subtleties of coprocessor programming techniques should check out Ray Duncan's recent seven-part series on arithmetic routines in his Power Programming column, (PC MAGAZINE, November 14, 1989, through March 13, 1990).

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