

The magazine for members of

The **ARM** *Club*

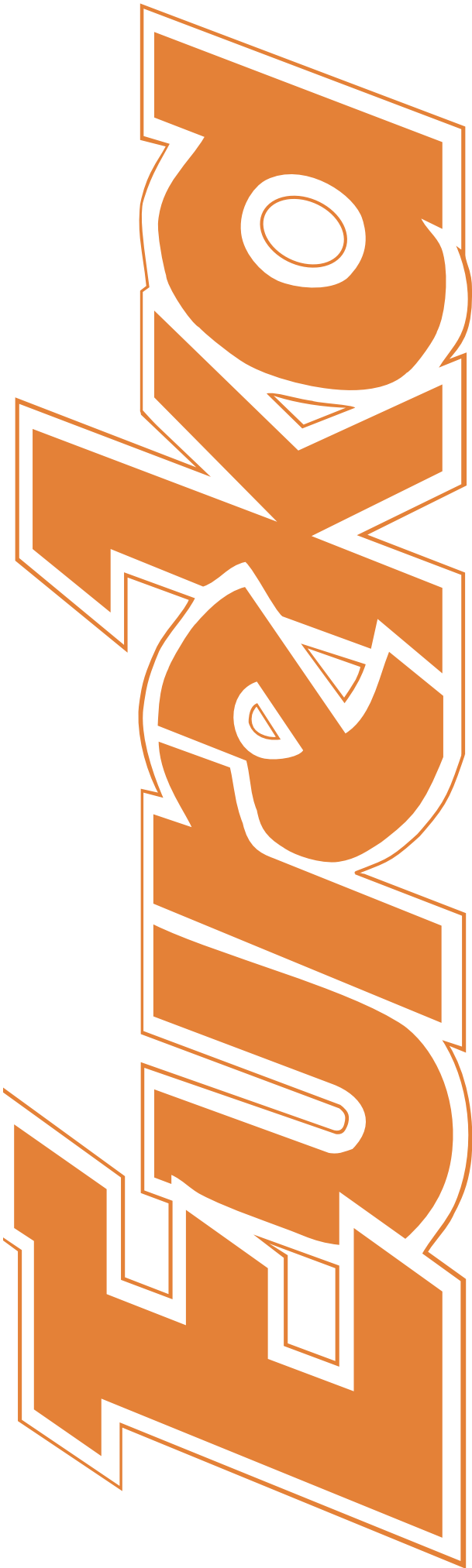
Sib2Draw

**Ron's Adventures with
Windows at Work**

**Customised RISC OS
Machines**



Issue 51 — Autumn 2004



The Real World

What always amazes me about the RISC OS world is it's inability to understand basic economics. Time and time again one reads on news and user groups of someone putting forward a splendid idea (for them), for somebody else (never themselves), miraculously to come up with some amazing new software or an all singing all dancing machine, costing next to nothing. Some basic lessons on demand and supply would be useful.

However you will be pleased to know I will not be including economic lessons in this magazine. It is marvellous that software writers like Martin Würthner (Artworks) and hardware companies like Castle and MicroDigital still manage to produce anything at all. Quite regularly on the newsgroups I read people moaning, "Where is an up to date browser", "flash player",

"DVD player?", "Where is the next RISC OS laptop?" etc. Just supply the money and all is possible.

Some of these things may come about, given time, but the RISC OS world is never going to catch up with the world of Windows.

RISC OS companies are not going to get rich relying on the enthusiasts' market, they have to supply machines to the business world. Here the power/processor speed of the machine is not the main consideration but perhaps it's ease of use and reliability. The new A75 produced by Stuart Tyrell is a good example of this.

RISC OS' strengths are its GUI and its non-reliance on hard drives - long may it continue.

Andrew Wyver

All opinions expressed in Eureka are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Club or it's committee members and officers.

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Who you need and where to send



The new 'solder it yourself' portable Risc PC

RISC Bytes

Castle shatters RISC OS World

All parties pick up the pieces—rebuild world—and life carries on as before

Earlier in June Castle (CTL) were in dispute with Risc OS Ltd (ROL) about licensing and licensing fees from RISC OS. CTL claimed that they had bought RISC OS 'lock stock and barrel' from Pace and that ROL now owe the licensing fees they were formerly paying Pace. Both sides issued statements basically explaining why they were in the right.

Meanwhile developers like Stuart Tyroll and Virtual Acorn had been forced to suspend trading in products using RISC OS 4 after CTL informed them that it was cancelling ROL's licence to supply RISC OS 4.

However at a shareholders meeting in July all the parties concerned seem to have come to some agreement though the details of this are unclear at the time of going to press

Audio capture software for Iyonix

AudioIn, a new application developed by Christian Ludlum, records a WAV file from "any available audio channel". The software is for use in Castle's Iyonix and is available to Iyonix users from the Castle disc update site.

An audio input socket is provided in the Iyonix by the on-board AC97 chip.

CD Burn

Sales and support of CDBurn have been taken over by author Steffen Huber. hubersn Software has been founded "to give a new home to CD Burn".

Previously distributed by Warm Silence Software all enquiries regarding CDBurn should be directed to hubersn Software. The software is Iyonix compatible and also allows for multitasking CD writing.

32bit RiScript being developed

Paul Reuvers of X-Ample has announced the development of a 32bit version of RiScript, the major PDF (portable Document Format) viewer and producer for the RISC OS platform. The new version should now support path clipping of objects (a major failing of the old version), allowing greater ease in transforming Sibelius and Artworks files into PDF format.

X-Ample has taken over development of the package from Cerilica.

For up to the
minute RISC OS
news

visit

DROBE

www.drobe.co.uk

New RISC OS Web Design SmartGroup

There is a new smartgroup specifically devoted to the subject of designing websites on Risc Os computers. In the first two weeks of its existence subjects discussed include W3C validation, use of Risc Os art packages for web graphics, and putting sound on web pages.

The group's website is <http://www.smartgroups.com/groups/riscosweb> and its email address is *riscosweb@smartgroups.com*

Articles required for Eureka

Remember that everyone who contributes an article to the magazine will have their membership extended, free of charge, for every issue in which their work appears.

Midlands Show

Like a phoenix the Midlands show is reborn this year at the National Motorcycle Museum on Saturday 4th December. See the Ad on page 25 of this magazine.

Sib2Draw

Walter Lo Nigro
Nationality Italian
Age 41

Walter Lo Nigro has a background of choral conducting and is currently choir master and conductor at the Tartini Music Conservatory in Trieste. Perhaps more importantly he has also developed Sib2Draw, a sophisticated music graphic software package for RISC OS.



The Editor takes a look at what in his opinion is a much underestimated program

Background

Around 1992 the Finn brothers developed a music scoring program that was by far the most advanced and straightforward on the market - ***Sibelius 7***. It was designed to take advantage of the speed of the current ARM processors that Acorn used in their computers and was streets ahead of similar programs for the PC and Mac.

The screen display was almost WYSIWYG and was the best effort at the time to replace music manuscript paper and the pencil. One of it's most useful features was that it could export output in the form of draw files to enable further manipulation of the score and to allow the inclusion of musical examples into desktop publishing programs such as ***Impression***. The similar programs for PC could only export bitmap

files which do not give the scalability of vector files. However on the collapse of Acorn in 1999 the Finn brothers announced that they would cease development on **Sibelius 7** and brought out a PC version just called **Sibelius**. This program has now become one of the leading music scoring programs in the PC world and is quickly becoming the de facto standard.

Sibelius 7 though is still an extremely useful music program albeit lacking some of the bells and whistles of the PC version. However it still has some useful advantages over the PC version, one being the drawfile export. In order to take advantage of this and to add features that **Sibelius 7** lacks Walter Lo Nigro developed **Sib2Draw**

What it does

Sib2Draw is a graphics program which is designed to take output in the form of drawfiles from **Sibelius 7** and convert them to **Sib2Draw** format so that further manipulation can take place.

The program

In order to import the music score

from **Sibelius 7** the program first of all has to be 'hooked' to the **Sibelius** score which has to be open on the desktop so that the various styles and settings can be extracted from the **Sibelius 7** score. This is done from the Icon bar icon which gives you various options on how the output is to be assembled in **Sib2Draw** (Fig. 1). The score can then be imported .

Once the score is in **Sib2Draw** you are presented with the first page of the score (Fig. 2). Manipulation of the score is then done through the various menu options that follow:-

Enter

The usual draw shapes can be used with the addition of any polygon along with some musical ones like staves, hairpins and slurs (Fig. 3). Slurs in **Sib2Draw** can be manipulated much more freely than in **Sibelius 7** enabling slur shapes to be produced that are impossible in **Sibelius 7** (see below).



Text can be entered in all the styles of **Sibelius 7** and extra

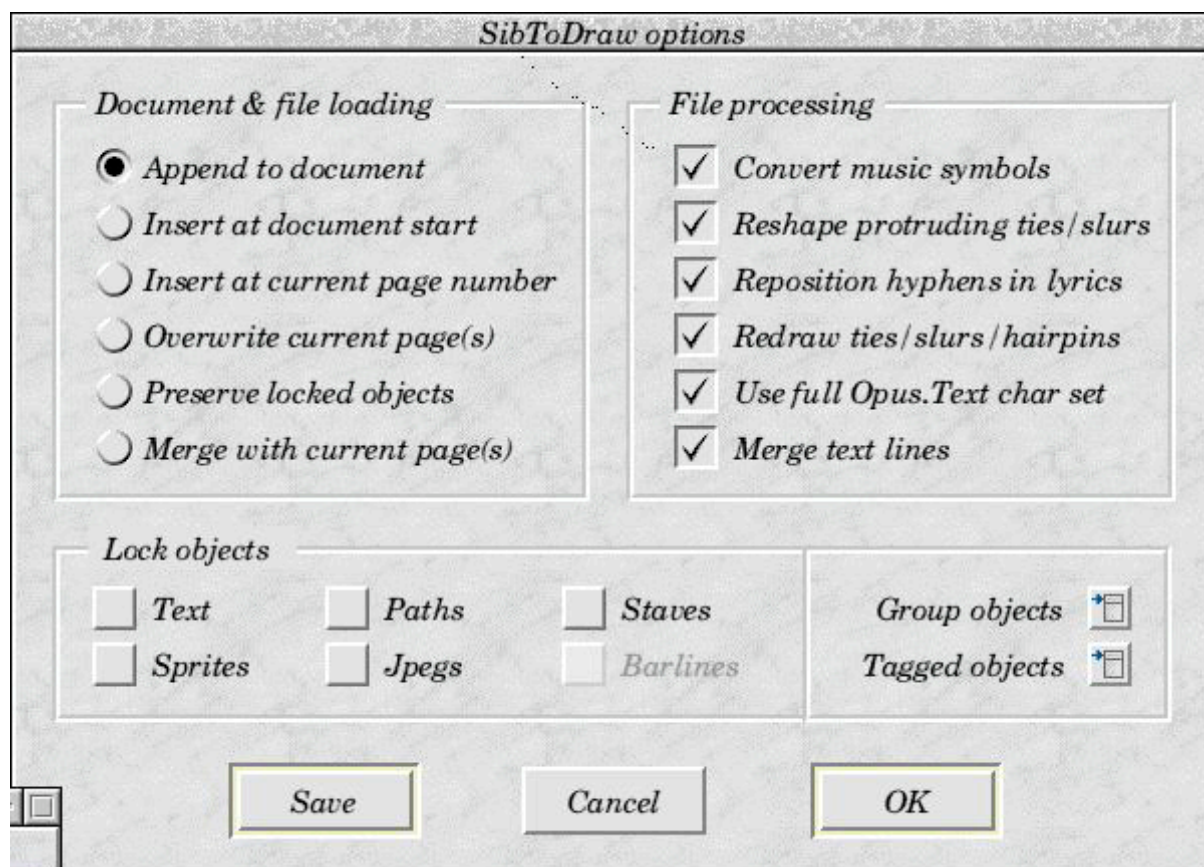


Fig. 1

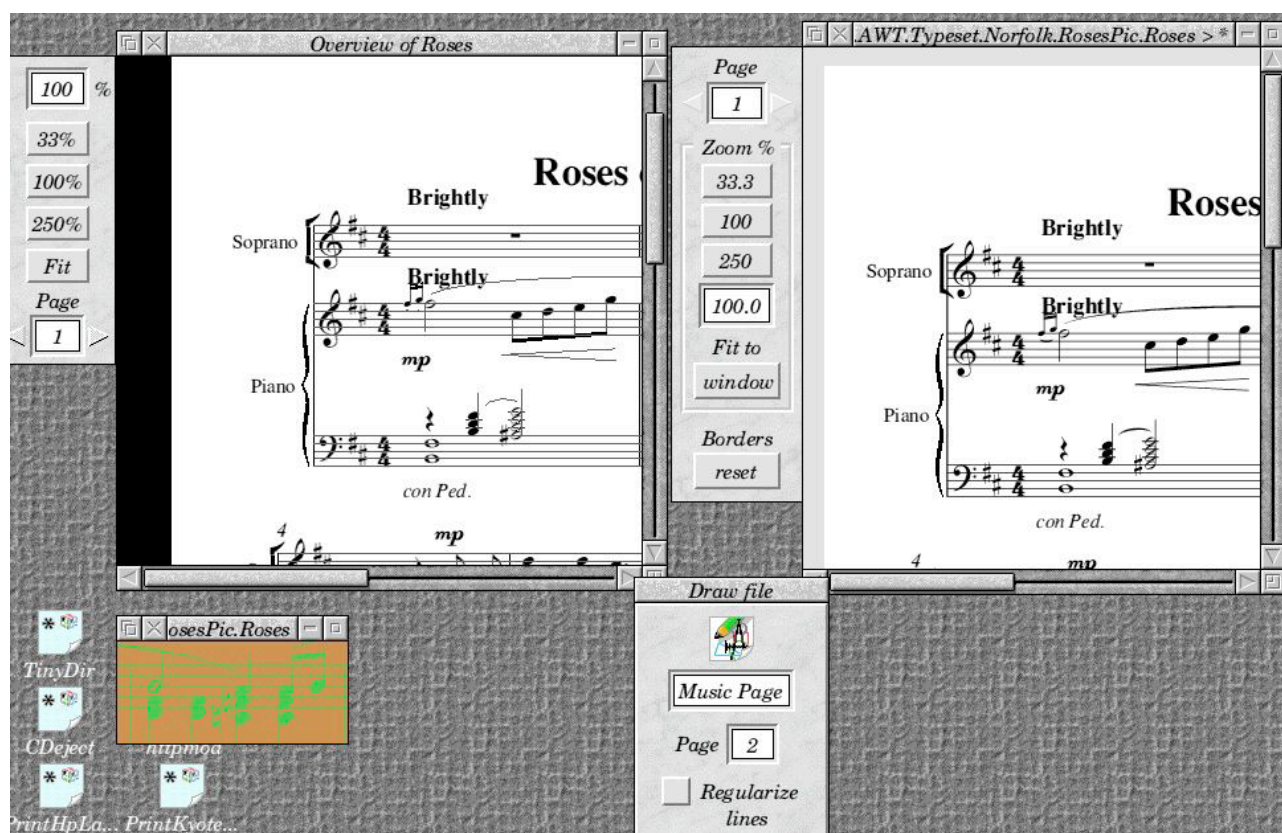


Fig. 2

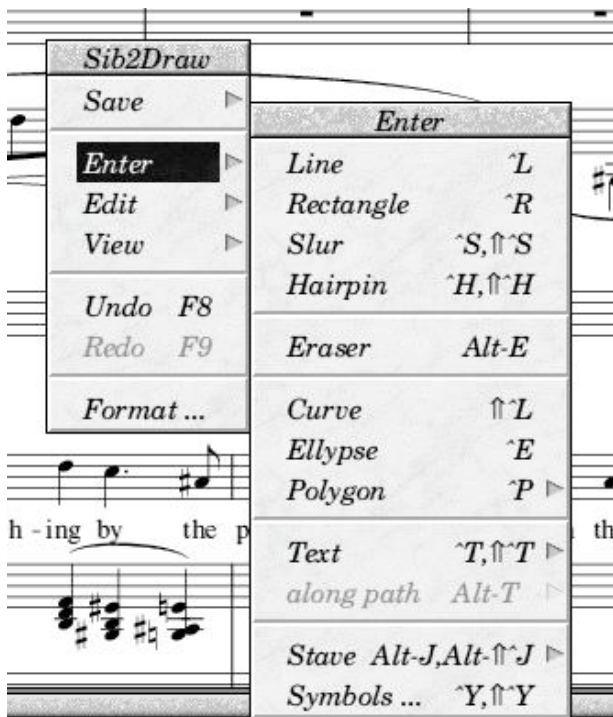


Fig. 3

styles can be generated. Also text can be entered to follow a path. A recent addition to the program is the symbols library (Fig. 4) into which the user can add other symbol fonts and edit the existing symbols to make new ones.

Edit (Fig. 5)

The usual Draw type editing operations can be carried out plus the additions of being able to lock objects to the page so they cannot be moved or altered, cut and paste to a clipboard, skew objects, add white borders and/or boxes to

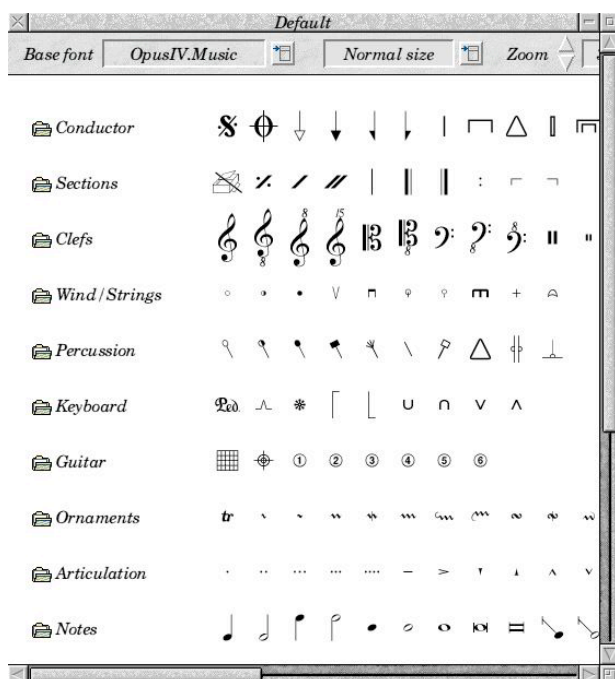


Fig. 4

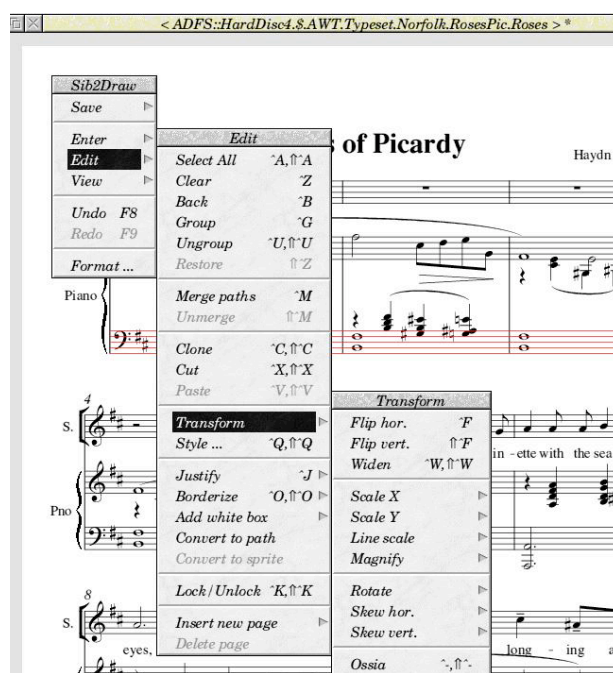


Fig. 5

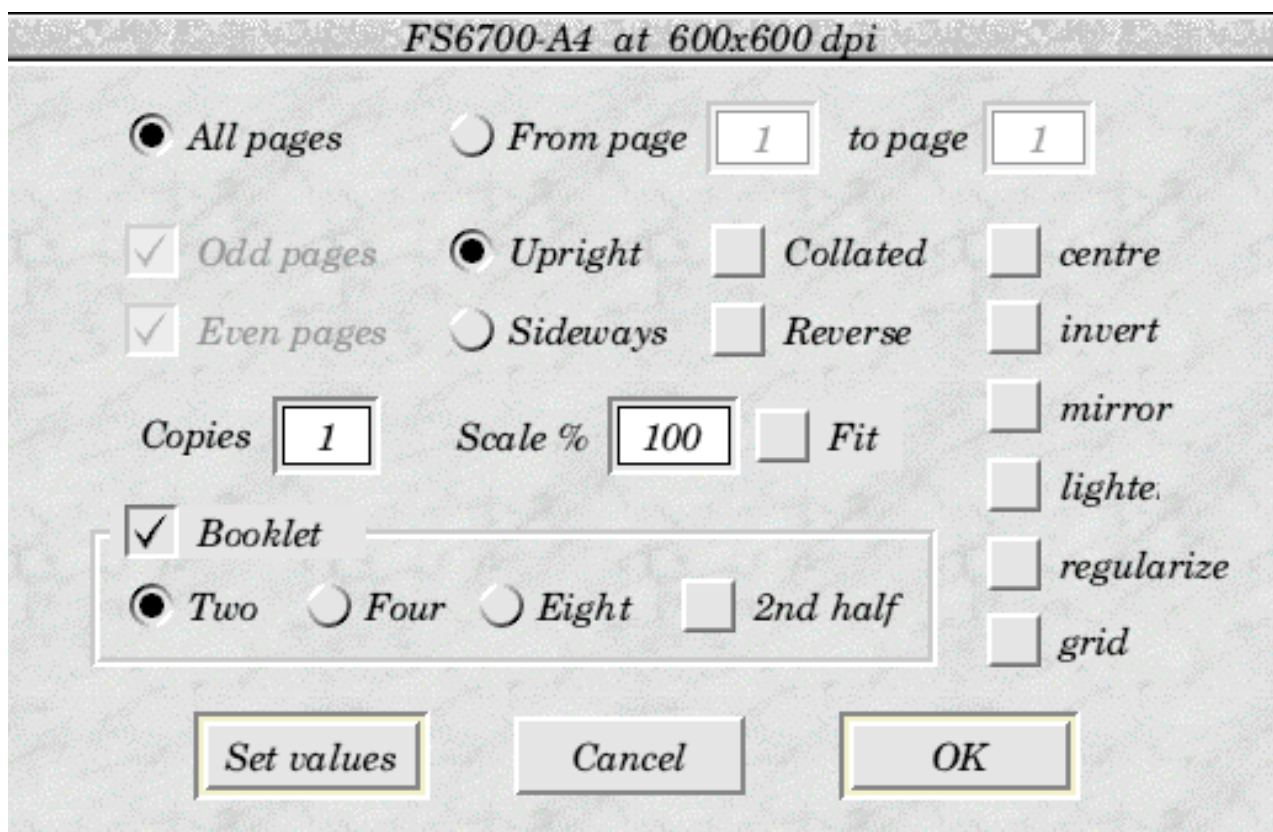


Fig. 6

objects and the useful facility using the Ossia function to make staves and all objects (notes, expression marks, slurs etc.) into small staves. **Sibelius 7** can do this but imperfectly as text size is not altered and slurs become separated from the notes leaving a lot of tidying up to be done.

As a **Sib2Draw** file can be a multi page file, at the bottom of the edit menu is the ability to add or delete pages.

View

The magnifier gives a magnified view of part of the page in a new window. The usual editing operations can be carried out in this window.

Various grids can be used with the usual locking options and you can view what is on the clip board and any erasers that have been used.

Undo/Redo

Multiple undo and redos are available.

Format

This allows you to change page size, stave size, margins, guttering, stave line thickness and page numbering.

Further features

There are a number of features that at the moment can only be accessed via the keyboard. These include editing symbols, aligning objects and selecting locked objects.

Various options are available for printing (Fig. 6) including several booklet layouts

Sib2Draw allows direct import by drag and drop of Draw, sprite and JPEG files. Text at the moment cannot be imported directly only via a draw file.

Output can be saved in Sib2Draw format or as Draw files

Summing up

Advantages

Sib2Draw allows further manipulation of **Sibelius 7** files.

The program can be used as a conventional vector drawing

program and is the only vector drawing program for RISC OS to allow multi page documents.

Unconventional modern music scores can be set directly without having to use **Sibelius 7** see (Fig. 7) a copy of a page from Luciano Berio's score **Circles**. The original is hand drawn.

Musical examples can be easily used in DTP work.

Disadvantages

No manual or help files at the moment.

Keyboard short-cuts are not documented and some of these functions are not available through the menus.

To come

Next release version will be 2.09 which includes support for object cloning (i.e. to have one or more 'virtual' instances of an object on a page without really copying it, sparing a lot on memory etc).

Next planned version should be 2.10+, and should include full DTP support, i.e. text effects, nested super/subscript, formatting of formulas, flowing text stories in

Ron's Adventures with Windows at Work.

The first computer comes.

One day, a while ago, I had just returned to my den having decided that my work load had diminished sufficiently to enable me to switch on the filter coffee machine and await the promised delivery of some delicious West Indian style bread pudding. (For the benefit of



door is flung open and two strangers appear. "Hello lads what can I do you for?" quip I. This falls on unresponsive ground as the obviously senior of the two gives me a stony look and grates out, "Factory two maintenance den?" I rise from my chair and go outside, yes the notice on the door still says 'Maint Fact2'. I affirm that by some mischance they

Ron Briscoe at work with the wonderful worlds of the IT department and Windows™

anyone thinking of sending me begging letters I am not a rich eccentric but am employed as a maintenance pipefitter/plumber, so don't bother.) Suddenly the den

have found the secret location of the den.

A word or two of explanation here. Although the den is

nominally mine, owing to management skulduggery I have to share it with two toolroom fitters, who work shift about, and the maintenance multi-skilled who rotate across the factory site on a fortnightly basis. This means that the den contains three workbenches, assorted cupboard and shelving units, a sink unit, four chairs and the normal maintenance den fixtures i.e. fridge, microwave, toaster, hifi unit and my filter coffee maker, so not a lot of room for much else.

I am mentally debating whether or not to phone the security up and report two suspicious characters who are obviously casing the joint when stone face speaks again. "We are from I.T. come to install your PC." The penny drops, for ages now people who can be bothered to turn up at the company's monthly team brief sessions have been reporting that the maintenance/toolroom are going to be inflicted with computers for an undisclosed reason. "Is that a real PC or a Windows 'Start up today and come back tomorrow when the desktop is visible' PC?" ask I. This is ignored as stone face prowls round the den, finally stopping by the only piece of visible wall and raps out to his

underling, "Here will have to do." I point out that the only reason that there is bare wall showing at that spot is because the toolroom fitters' coat locker needs the space to enable the locker door to open. "They can shift it then," is the only reply. Bearing a self-satisfied smirk stone face signals to his sidekick and they exit the den. After much debate and measurement I decided to alter my six drawer free standing unit so as to slide it under my workbench, thus creating sufficient space for a computer workstation. This done we inform our head of department who passes on the message to the IT wallah's that we require the computer to be fitted on a workstation. Does this make any difference? If you have not already fallen asleep read on.

A couple of weeks pass and once again the den door is wrenched open and stone face enters followed by his underling pushing a trolley bearing several things but nowhere in sight is anything resembling a computer workstation. "No workstation?" say I. "I think that the unit is better fixed to the wall." ripostes stone face "Why hasn't the locker been moved? Well you will have to move it later when we have finished." I decide to make some

fresh coffee and watch the proceedings.

The underling unloads the trolley, including a two tier wall frame unit. He then proceeds to place it on the wall and move it up and down until stone face is satisfied that anyone looking at the monitor screen will get severe neck ache. Whilst this is going on I am passing an interested eye over the rest of the gear, old 14 inch monitor, a no longer needed old computer and some rather nice gear for fixing the frame to the wall. Wait what is this? The wall plugs they have got are not suitable for the job and the screws are both undersized in diameter and length.

After borrowing a set of steps the underling proceeds to drill the wall, remarking on how easy it is with a new masonry drill and the power of their new DeWalt driller. I ignore this as I have already swapped their unused spare battery for one of our totally used ones. The drilling soon done, the wall plugs are inserted. They are too loose. No problem, stone face fumbles about in their commodious toolbox and produces a roll of insulation tape. This is wrapped

around the wall plugs until they are a nice tight fit. After screwing the frame to the wall the underling gives it a gentle pull and it promptly comes away from the wall complete with wall plugs.

When their brains have recovered from this little setback our intrepid pair decide to use firmer fixings. The ones they choose are known as 'Parabolts' and I just know that I and the by now returned other members of the den are in for some real entertainment.

A short time later the intrepid pair return with said 'Parabolts' and find the first problem the selected items will not go through the holes in the frame, this remedied our duo open out the holes in the wall and bang the fixings in through the frame. Much grunting later the underling has succeeded in tightening the nuts up enough to satisfy stoneface, a cursory glance shows me that the underling has screwed the nuts down so far that they are actually binding on the unthreaded shank of the parabolts. This means that the parabolts have been pulled almost out of the wall.

The underling then places the monitor on the top shelf and the computer on the lower shelf, plugging in all the relevant cables as he goes along. This all done the monitor and computer are switched on. We wait and wait until at last the desktop appears, but there is a problem and we are told that we cannot connect to the server.

The intrepid duo engage in jargonese away from the computer. This is fortunate as without warning the two top fixings give up on their tenuous hold on the brickwork and the frame tips forward spilling the computer and monitor to the floor via the edge of the fitters workbench. There is a satisfying crash, bang, flash and all the power in the den goes off. In the ensuing darkness the toolroom fitter drops an extremely large and heavy object with sharp edges on the computer. Exit dynamic duo bearing extremely damaged goods.

Computer number 2

A month later the underling returns alone pushing a computer workstation bearing a computer, monitor, printer and ancillaries. A couple of hours

later he pronounces himself satisfied and informs us that we have limited access, no internet, no games, no screensavers in fact we are restricted to the one program that the computer has been put in for, he exits with a smirk.

I leave the resident Windross expert to see what he can do with the computer and wander over to the main shop with a desire to find out more about the mysterious program. My boss the Engineering Services manager, (note that we no longer have Works/Maintenance Engineers, I leave the results to your own imagination.) is very proud of his latest toy. "Cost 50k and is the bees knees. Every single machine is entered in its data base along with available spares and suppliers, its got costings, salaries, machine downtime and much, much more. "What's our role in this amazing piece of technology?" ask I. "Oh you will find out about that during your training" says he returning to his computer which I notice is doing comparisons on time taken to effect repairs on one type of machine.

Returning to the den I find that the Windows expert has retrieved

Excel, Word, Powerpoint et al but more importantly has found and re-installed several desktop games, these will keep the multi-skilled quiet at least. I inform the den of my conversation with the boss and observations of what he was doing. This causes some disquiet but I am not bothered for I have every faith in our management. Two days later the software is installed or rather access to it enabled. At the same time all of our other programs are removed including the most eye burning desktop that we could collectively devise.

Getting to grips with Windows™.

Whilst waiting for our comprehensive training we are invited to 'play' with the program. Always willing to try anything new, no matter how distasteful, I switch the computer on. After a long delay and much 'Windows is loading' screen parking I am invited to input my password. "What's the password?" ask I. "They are all taped to the side of the monitor." is the answer. "All?" think I, and four passwords later up comes the dreaded program icon, I note that all the other programs have been recovered again.

I click on the icon and activity starts, some time later an error box comes up on screen 'The data base is too large and will be curtailed.' More activity ensues and wonder of wonders the program window opens. This window itself contains several buttons with fancy but totally meaningless graphics on them. I click on one that looks like a cog being bashed with a spanner. This turns out to be a waste of time as all I get is a window informing me 'This part of the program is unavailable for now.' This suits me for after only an hour on this machine my nerves are shredded and I feel in need of a strong cup of coffee.

Refreshed I return to the fray and find out several interesting things, like, I am (unfortunately) on the database as a user, that none of the services (air/steam/water/waste) have been entered into the database, meaning that I can't type out an end of shift report as the program will not accept non existent service locations. I also find that certain assets that I personally maintain are according to the program in fixed positions whereas in actuality they move about the company a fair bit, meaning the

program will not accept the location, (it is on a computer don't forget and thus cannot be wrong), and that the input number of said asset cannot be at the location I say it is.

After a few days everyone agrees that the program is a bag of nails written by different people who did not communicate with any other programmer whatsoever. For light relief I try **Word**, this is a big mistake as I am used to much superior products and the experience leaves me feeling sorry for anyone who has to use a Windows machine on a regular basis. Within a short period of time the computer is only used for playing games and printing out the local pirate lists of available CDs.

Training

We are beginning to think that the management have forgotten all about it when it is announced that we are to be '**Trained**'. This we are told will consist of being split into groups of six and reporting for training in the IT training centre on specific days where we will be given a whole two hours instruction in the use of the new toy by an expert provided by the software house.

Now although we had supposedly split into groups of six, my group which was also the last, actually comprised of seven. "Not that bad thinks I, there are six computers in the room that we will be using, so only two people will have to share." This shows how naive even I, an experienced man of the factory world, can be.

The day of the training session dawns and our group sidle into the IT Work Centre. (Honestly that is what was written on the door.) There are as reported six computers already pre-started along with our manager, his two underlings and a nervous looking young man. I choose to occupy one of the computers at the back and am immediately joined by the spare man and the rest of the group choose a computer each. This is a mistake as the tutor has decided that because no one has been practising with the software he has rather a lot to get through in two hours and so we will double up. This meant of course that yours truly ended up sharing with two others, one on the keyboard another on the mouse and me reading the instructions. "Right!" Says the tutor. "Who has any experience of computers?" This falls on deaf ears because

we are all applying the well known maxim that you should never volunteer for anything bar overtime. The boss leaves his two underlings to assist the tutor and we begin. I soon find out that the two lads I am with genuinely know nothing about computers at all so I have to show one how to use the mouse and the other what key to press when required. This slows down my reading somewhat for I have found out that my user manual is in fact an advanced users manual for administrators only. I appropriate this for further study.

After two hours of filling in 'End of shift reports' and conducting searches under asset, user, work issue, tradesmen and location etc we are given time off for good behaviour and return gratefully to work. Despite all this intensive training no one seems at all keen to continue the good work by further practice. In fact no one can even be bothered to play games and the computer sits in solitary silence.

Computer number three

Just as the threat of disciplinary action is forcing desultory attempts to practice writing end

of shift reports we are saved. A knock on the den door heralds the ingress of a friendly face. "Time for your regular portable appliance testing. How about a coffee first?" After coffee he proceeds to test all of our gear, everything passes except the computer plus two of the leads supplied by the IT ghouls. He impounds the two leads and slaps a big red 'Do not use P.A.T failure' notice on the computer. We ring up the boss to tell him we need to have our computer changed.

Three days later the computer is taken away and yet another and much better model is installed in its place. However stone face extracts his revenge by disabling everything he can think of. We have no floppy drive, no CD player, no USB and even the sound out is disabled. In fact we cannot even alter the desktop.

Despite all this our resident PC expert manages to retrieve all the usual bits except for the games and we convince the management that the fitters should have access to the machine, tool and product drawings. The clinching factor in our argument was that any of our company's customers could

download any of the drawings, even commercially sensitive ones, via the intranet. This I suspect caused more than a few ripples in the IT department.

And now? The PC sits forlornly unloved and unused on its workstation due to several reasons, The main one being that due to security demands the I.T. Department keep changing our passwords and neglect to tell us and we don't bother to ask. The second reason is that, being used to the RISC OS way of doing things I found that when I clicked on the window close button the application shut down and removed itself from the icon bar. This of course meant that the app had to be restarted again with all of the aforementioned delays. Everyone quickly started to click

on the 'little X button' and only typed very verbose end of shift reports with one finger, leading to an insufficient time for everybody to input said reports. The third and most relevant factor is that the Engineering Services manager has been made redundant and his responsibilities have been split between his underlings and they find it much more productive to return to the old paper based system of work records. This I am afraid is due to the fact that a certain cunning person found out that one could alter other people's end of shift reports if they were to do a search involving 'Trades' and then click on another tradesmans number and told the rest of the department.

The future? Who knows?

Send your queries, whether technical or elementary, to our Technical Help Service, by email to support@armclub.org.uk or write to the club's Merton Court address (which you can find on the last page) or fax 07020 954018.

If it's urgent you can phone 07010 708098. (Phone and fax are at higher rates.)

Free for all

!Antispam

I was pleased to find out that rebooting my A7000, and restarting **AntiSpam**, it seemed to have started where it had finished, but I was wrong in thinking this

parties. **AntiSpam** has some excellent help (but one needs **!StrongHelp**), and this, combined with a usefully published rules file on the Internet by Bryn Evans on the comp.sys.acorn.apps (subject "**AntiSpam** Rules OK") gave me a

Andy Burgess looks at Antispam, PERL and WebJames

was the case - all of that email was somehow lost! When you start an AntiSpam session be prepared to keep going, as so far as I can see, there's no way of gracefully stopping it once it's started! I didn't really care - most of it was probably junk anyway!!

I had left my email for a couple of weeks, and found to my horror I had 2042 messages, of which only 43 I wanted to keep. I deleted these through **WebMail**, as it was quicker, and while I enjoyed myself doing that, I came up with a methodology to delete mails. This method may not work for everyone, but would work for me, as I only wanted to see emails from certain

decent starting block to start eradicating my mail. I used his suggestion of accepting from friends, and deleting the rest, basically following his rules to the letter.

I set up my rules file along the the following format (the Colon before the equals means use this part of the header, the star (*) indicates a wildcard, and a pipe a comment, blank lines are allowed):

From people I want to receive email from

*Accept From: = *BBCShop* Accept
From: = Brave*New*World**

With subjects I'm interested in -

I'm potty about planes, but also want to get bounced mails.

*Accept Subject: = *aviation* Accept Subject: = *failure* Accept Subject: = *returned**

|

The following I presume to only allow replies to yourself.

*Accept In-Reply-To: = *ajburgess@**

| Kill other email

*Delete Content-Type: = *text/html**

*Delete Content-Type: = *text/plain**

*Delete Content-Type: = *multipart/alternative**

And not do anything with emails greater than 30K (I presume again)

Defer Length >3000

Mr Evans' rule file was far more detailed than what I've written above and it may be worth a squint. I initially followed Mr Evan's suggestion of deferring "multipart/alternative" contents, but it seemed to leave too many emails I didn't want, and I'm about to delete "text/plain" documents as I seemed to have a few of these I didn't want. It took me three hours for **AntiSpam** to process my 3000 odd emails - I'm only on an old A7000+ with a 56K

modem running at only 46K. I should really do my email cleaning more frequently - this was about 3 weeks' worth of un-picked-up rubbish. It would have taken longer for Voyager to pick up all of this, and I wouldn't have known what it was doing; **AntiSpam** did tell me it was on email 10 of 3034, it had deleted 3, accepted 3 and defaulted 3 etc.

The only thing I've got against **AntiSpam** is it doesn't seem to have a stop-running facility. If you have thousands of junk emails to weed though it would be nice to chip-away at them without having to do one sitting to avoid losing email!

Although it is a lot of work to set up the rules file and my other niggle aside, I think that **AntiSpam** does at least give one the ability to weed out the rubbish emails, and once I've refined my rules file to what I want, it know it will be a very useful addition to my Acorn software. If only I had something faster - like an Iyonix!!

PERL and !WebJames

<http://www.branchthroughzer.o.uklinux.net/internet/webjames/>.

<http://plum.flirble.org/~nick/>

P/perl_113_riscpc.zip or

**http://plum.flirble.org/~nick/
P/perl_113_riscpc.zip** (though
the RiscPC version worked on my
A7000+)

I've been interested in learning
'server side' programming, but as
usual was loathed to have to
wind up my PC and study
something on Windoze. I am a
member of Paul Vigay's RISC OS
Academy

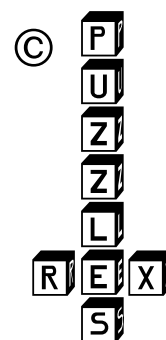
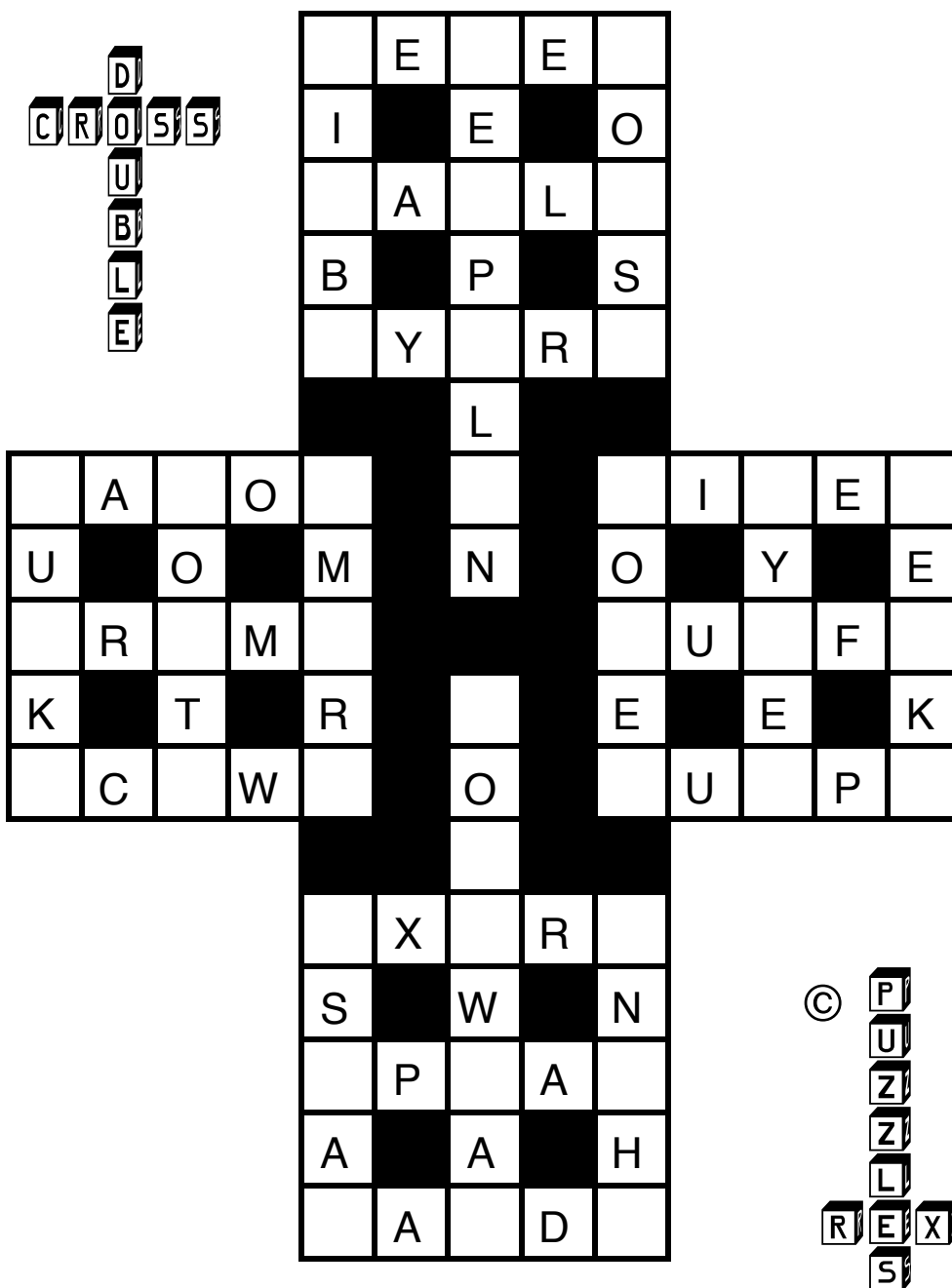
(**www.vigay.com/academy**),
and so was very keen to learn
PERL when I discovered that
links were available to it from his
Academy. Unfortunately, due to
pressures outside of his website, I
couldn't partake of a course from
his website, as the course is as
yet incomplete, but I did find
links to PERL, and a piece of
software called **WebJames** (both
free, and both work on RISC OS),
which sets up a pseudo web
server on your RISC OS Machine,
and allows PERL to run.

PERL is a simple, though slightly
cryptic language derived from the
UNIX operating system. It stands
for Practical Extraction Report
Language and it basically creates
HTML (HyperText Markup
Language) web pages 'on-the-fly'
through a program. You need to

know HTML before embarking
on learning PERL, and RISC OS
courses in this are available on
Paul's website (though currently
only lessons 1 to 3 are complete).
Paul's PERL Lesson 6(!) in the
Academy hand-holds you through
setting up **WebJames** and PERL
(even though there are no lessons
3 to 5), and once this is done, you
can start writing PERL programs
straightaway. I used the humble
!Edit to create my PERL
programs, and bought a PC-style
learning-to-program with PERL
book, skipping the long winded
and unnecessarily complex
installation instructions for the
PC Apache server! I did hit a
problem creating a program
without changing the file type to
PERL it didn't run in **WebJames**
till I had. I also hit a problem
when I used the command
'PRINT' instead of 'print' - took
me a while to "twig" the
command had to be in lower
case!

It was great to be using such a
widespread language on my
favourite computer platform.

!Organiser I've still got to try to
find time to play with **Organizer**
a bit more, and test drive some
new software.....



Place the 39 letters shown below
into the grid to make valid words

A	E	O	S
A	F	O	S
A	H	P	T
B	I	P	U
B	K	R	U
B	L	R	X
C	L	S	Y
E	L	S	Y
E	M	S	Z
E	M	S	

Answer on page 42



CASTLE

2004

MIDLANDS RISCOS SHOW

2004



CASTLE



at

The National Motorcycle Museum

Solihull
Nr Birmingham

Saturday 4th December 2004

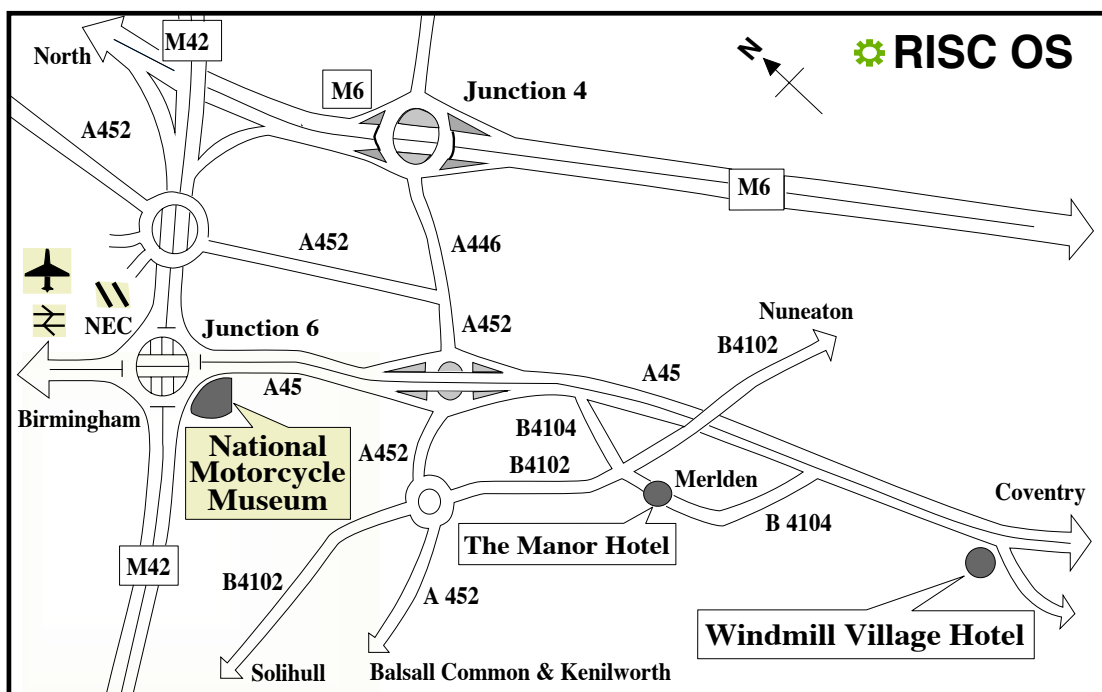
Adults £3, Arm Club members £2

Children under 14 (with an adult) FREE !

Doors open 10am - 4.30pm

YONIX pc.

YONIX pc.

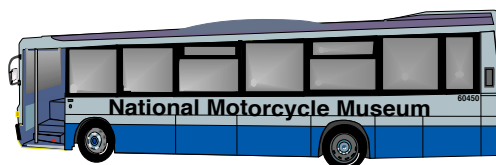
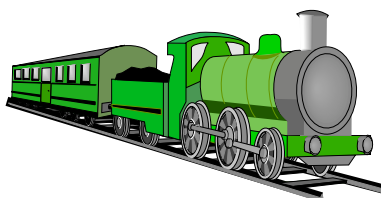


YONIX pc.

YONIX pc.

by public transport

or by road



A free coach service from Birmingham International rail station to and from The National Motorcycle Museum is available.

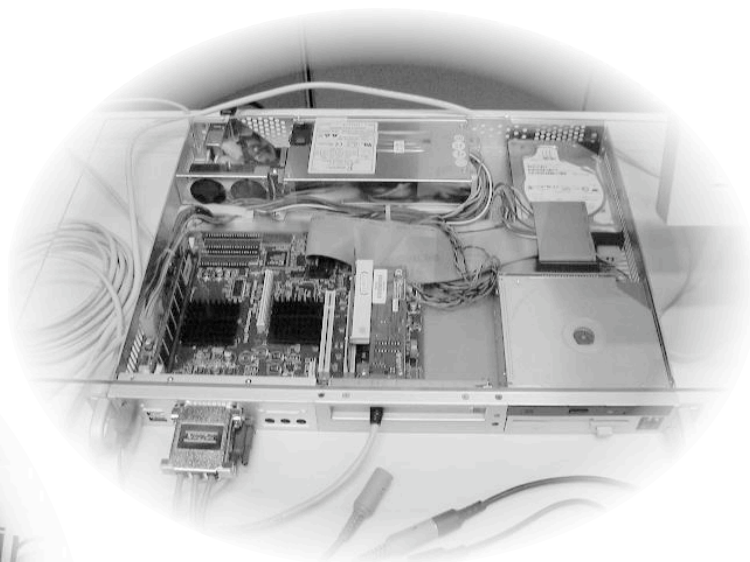
Birmingham International Airport is also only 10 minutes away and you could catch the monorail to the train station to use the free bus from there.

For further details: Tel. 07010 709 849 - Fax. 07020 954 018 - EMail. sales@armclub.org.uk
Web page: <http://www.armclub.org.uk> - ftp site: <ftp://ftp.armclub.org.uk>

RISC OS Variations

Machines from the Wakefield Show





Winning Games with Logic Part 7

Not sure where to start this one. What can I contribute to computer games? Yes I have played a few, but so has everyone else. Design? Well I could go a bundle on design techniques but I haven't known anyone stick to one. If you are writing a game alone, you only

good idea is prototyping e.g. as shown in Fig 1. However it may suffice to plan something out on paper first however crude, sketches, story plots etc.

The last time I tried to get a team together to write games was a

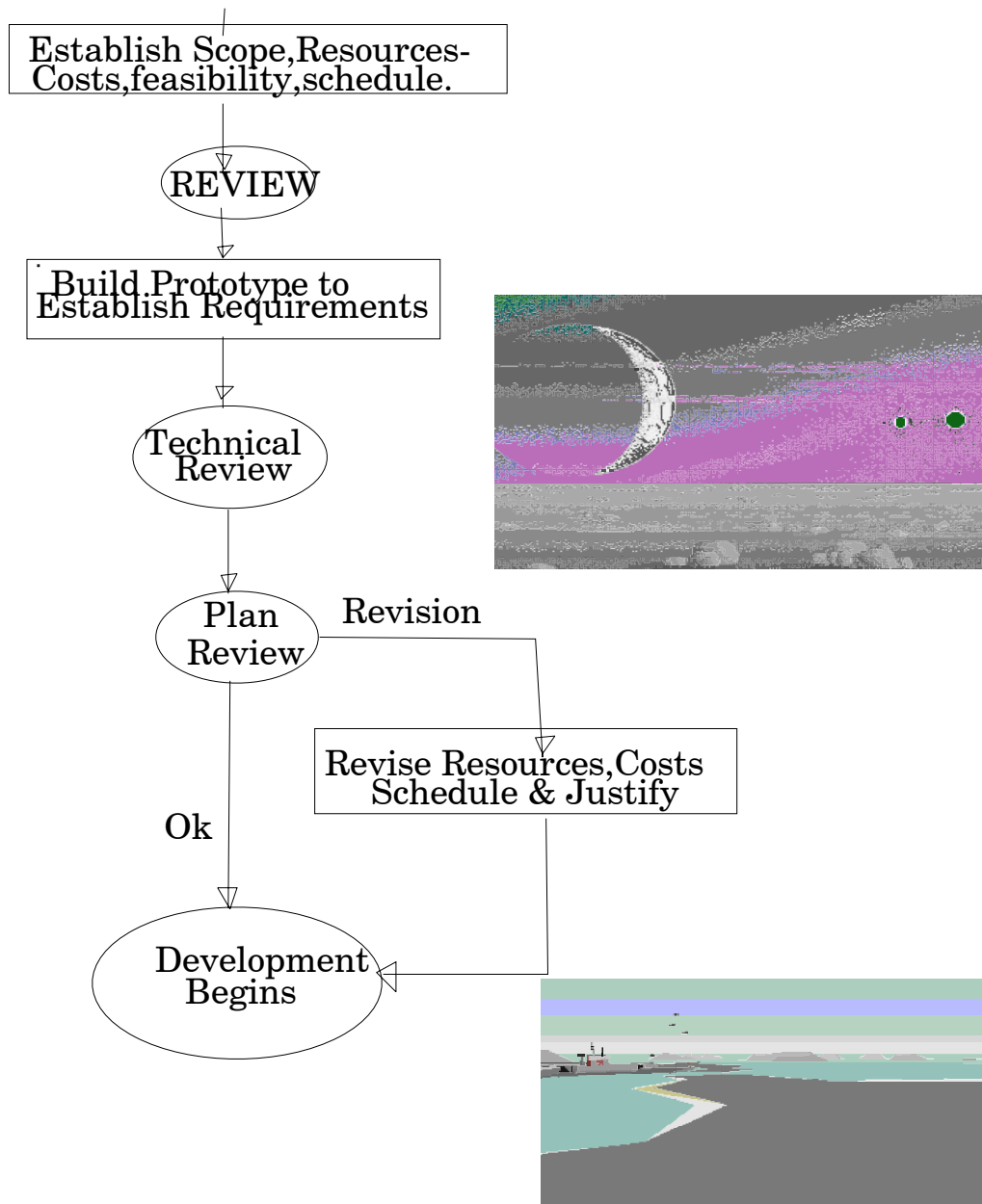
Barry Aulton deals with game design in a logical manner

need to communicate with yourself. This shouldn't be too much of a problem, (if it is go see a shrink!) If however there are 2 or more of you, you can end up writing different games!

Designing games is more of an art form than a science. It is a good idea to catalogue different ideas, e.g. character descriptions, interface techniques, sound effects, animation sequences depending on the game. Brainstorming sessions - a free exchange of original ideas is often a good idea to generate creative characters and stories. However sessions do need to be kept reasonably focused, with no-one dominating them. Another

disaster! One graphics designer wanted to do a 'beatemup', another suggested a wedding game? The other programmer suggested that everyone else do nothing till he writes a graphics engine. Yet another graphics designer was a skateboarding fiend and suggested as such. (A week later he sat on top of Mt. Blanc and decided he didn't want to design games! He later changed his mind again and went to work for Walt Disney)

Thus, this time I will stick to the logic bit! To clear the air for later I will attempt to define a few things, such as what are 'intelligence' and 'intelligent behaviour', but see also Eureka 46. If you have ever



The Definition Phase

This commences with a feasibility study of each viable alternative . The ideas that are deemed viable are then progressed to design & development stage . This is purely as an aid to the feasibility study itself . A very simple prototype for each alternative need only be implemented . For each one the required resources & cost benefit estimates are revised . All viable alternatives are then compared using agreed feasibility criteria . The ones that still seem viable proceed to the true game development phase .

Fig. 1

argued with someone only to find that there was just one word that you disagreed over you'll understand!

One of the problems the A.I. community (who disagree over almost everything,) has is jargon; having to modify or refine the meaning of words to make them precise enough to be used as a basis for discussion. Take the word 'LIFE' for instance. Before you decide if there is life on Mars, it is best to agree on what life is. A definition of life appeared in the ALIFE conference notes. It was followed by an article entitled - "Is The Romantic Novel Alive?" and another that concluded that humans beings were not alive, but the earth's Biosphere is. This may disappoint some of you, but the alternative is somewhat subjective. You may argue - "Humans are alive - coz we have self consciousness. There is nothing like that on Mars - thus Mars is a dead planet."

The different approaches in A.I. stems from their different backgrounds. By the early 1900's scientists had realised that biology had much to teach engineers. One of them was the philosopher - scientist Warren McCulloch who as a freshman at Haverford

College Pennsylvania was quizzed by a Quaker professor. "Warren" the professor asked , "what is thee going to be?" "I don't know," said McCulloch. "And what is thee going to do?" persisted the professor.

Still uncertain, McCulloch replied: "I have no idea, but there is one question I would like to answer: What is a number, that a man may know it, and a man that he may know a number?"

"Friend," said the kindly professor with a smile, "Thee will be busy as long as thee lives."

McCulloch and the mathematician Walter Pitts in 1942 suggested that computers and the brain may function in similar ways. Neurons in the brain may be thought of as devices for manipulating binary numbers.

This cybernetic (from the Greek word for steersman) or neural-modelling approach to machine intelligence was dubbed the 'bottom up' approach. The idea being to start with simple analogs of primitive creatures containing a few neurons and work up from there to the human level or beyond. The goal was to create devices that could observe the

environment and apply feedback to modify their behaviour as it was believed living organisms did. However at the time the analogy with living organisms was not particularly useful. Warren McCulloch once noted, "If you want a sweetheart in spring, don't get an amoeba and wait for it to evolve". However, I don't know if anyone has noticed, but computers are a tad faster these days and some A.I pioneers e.g. John Koza are attempting to do just that! For example, in 2000 Lipson and Pollack at Brandeis University Massachusetts used a computer to evolve 200 robot designs starting completely from scratch. Using a simulation program, they scored the robots (i.e. used a fitness function, see Eureka 45) by how fast they could move across the floor, replaced low fitness (slow) robot designs with ones of higher fitness, and mutated all the remaining robots again. After several hundred generations, they then built some of the most successful robots out of moulded plastic. These evolved robots that walk like inchworms, crabs, and other real animals, yet look like nothing on earth!

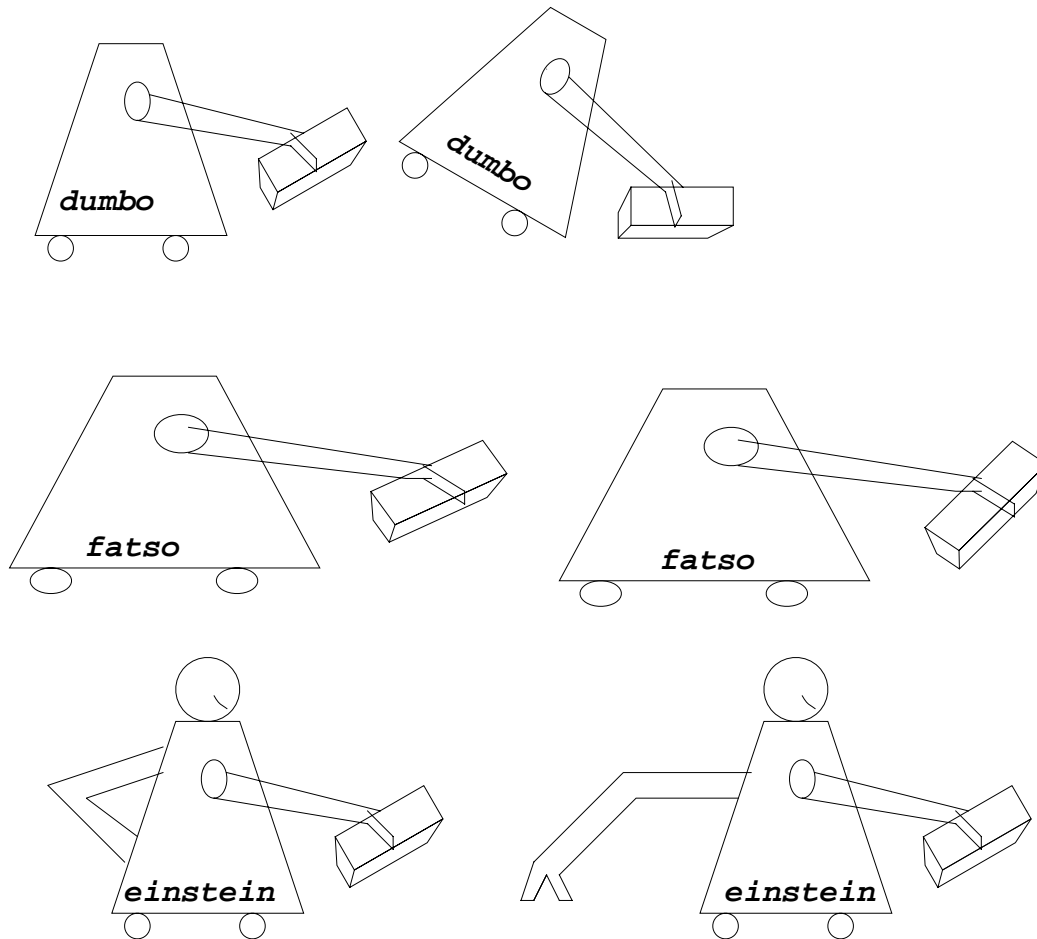
So what are the requirements for intelligence for a robot or virtual creature?

Just to get us in the mood I will tell you a story. Once upon a time there were three brick laying robots Dumbo, Fatso and Einstein. "Who's been eating my porridge?" says Dumbo. No that's not right! well you'll get the idea from Fig. 2. Note - this story has a moral, namely Fig. 3 :- "It ain't what you do it's the way that you do it"

You may have decided that intelligent behaviour requires reasoning. However primitive animals have no central nervous systems but still have a complex behaviour and are well adapted to their environment. Thus roboticists decided that initially their robots need to be designed along the lines of such creatures.

OK over to a book :-

"Intelligent behaviour in animals stems from the costs and benefits that accrue to different aspects of behaviour. The forces of evolution by natural selection tend towards the behavioural strategy and tactics that will best enable the animal to adapt to the current circumstances. It does not much matter how the optimal strategy is achieved. What matters is the behavioural outcome. This is judged by evolution in relation to the particular circumstances



Are you all seated comfortably. No ? Then I will begin. Once upon a time there were 3 robots. Dumbo, Fatso & Einstein. They were all set to work moving bricks. (Why, cos its me telling this story) Dumbo sets out but oh dear! disaster , Dumbo falls over when the brick is grasped. Fatso sets out successfully cos it is big, heavy & fat. Fatso is just a heavier Dumbo. Einstein however sets out & uses its free arm as a counterweight " Oh what a clever robot am I says Einstein"

It is intelligent behaviour of the robot to raise a counterbalance when it picks up the brick even if it is an automatic response. Intelligent behaviour requires the mechanical capacity i.e. to have the counterbalance & the environmental circumstances. Neither of the other robots can do this however big their onboard computers.

Fig. 2

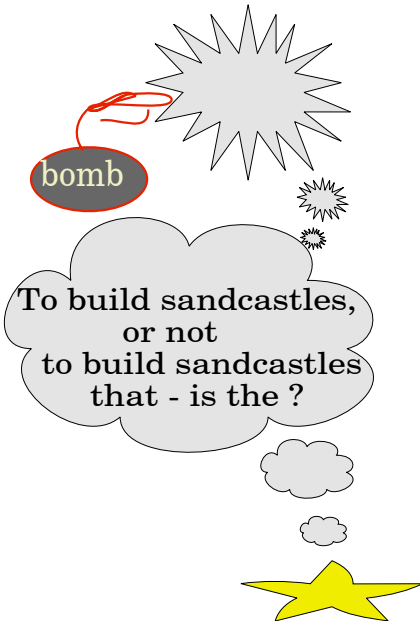
pertaining to each species. Intelligent behaviour is that which comes up with the right answer, irrespective of how that answer is arrived at.

If we think otherwise we may find ourselves in the ridiculous situation of judging a poorer solution to a problem to be more intelligent because it involves

Intelligent Behaviour



1) Intelligence requires a body. A computer with no body - that cannot control its environment is incapable of intelligent behaviour.



2) Only the consequences of intelligent behaviour can be called intelligent by virtue of its effect on the environment.

3) Intelligent Behaviour requires some judgement in relation to some criterion of intelligence. In nature, a species must survive. In a computer game we must make some judgement as to what constitutes intelligent behaviour e.g. winning the game.

Fig. 3

reasoning, than a better solution that does not.” (Ref. 1)

Suppose we consider that each activity that an animal does has a survival value to it. Animals are able to allocate priorities to activities in a general way. This problem can be approached by considering a measure of cost to an animal of abstaining from each activity in its natural repertoire. For example if an animal did not

feed, the cost would be high, but if it stopped grooming the cost may be less so. An animal that desired to do both, but did not have the time, (e.g. if predators are near) would sacrifice less in terms of fitness, if it spent its time feeding. However the animal's environment can change. Suppose it now takes longer for the animal to feed, since it is now having to obtain food from another food source. The animal can :-

A) Take the same time feeding and settle for less food.

B) Take more time feeding and thus have less time for other activities that must then be squashed into the remaining time.

C) Compromise between the two.

Houston and McFarland found that the extent to which an animal resists squashing can be represented using one parameter “RESILIENCE” which in economic terms equates to “inelasticity”. In the case when an animal insists on its normal amount of food, the ‘resilience’ of feeding is relatively high. Feeding has then ousted the other activities from the time available. Resilience affects the importance of an activity. During periods when time is a budget constraint, activities with a low resilience will tend to be ignored. In such times some activities may disappear from an animal’s repertoire. We may call such an activity a luxury one.

But how can such quantities as “motivation”, “fatigue” and “resilience” that we are having to define in the first place be combined?

Now hands up who can count!

1 sausage + 2 sausages = 3

sausages (so far so good!)

You can put your hands down now!

2 apples + 2 oranges = ? 4 pieces of fruit ?

You have probably realised by now that there is something more than mere addition involved such as should the quantities be added in the first place! Needless to say there is much controversy here and whole PHD’s that can be summarised “ADDEMUP” and others “*”.

So where are we? We are going to look at action selection methods and virtual creatures. To do this we will need to be able to add etc.

If you can’t, don’t worry. Your average pigeon is no Einstein either, but it still can make basic decisions.

Meanwhile if you are stuck for a technique you can Email me aultonb@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

Ref 1 *Intelligent Behaviour in Animals and Robots*, 1994
D Mc Farland. T Bosser MIT press -
Complex Adaptive Systems


New Membership Cards

It has been brought to our attention that most of the Membership Cards in circulation at the moment have an increasing array of old and defunct information on them, not least the old Freepost address that is no longer supported/ working.

Therefore we've had a new batch printed. You should find your own blank card included with this issue

of the magazine. Please fill in your own name and membership number (from the old card, or address label) and cherish in a safe place!

If you've lost your membership number, or can't find an inserted card, please contact Toby on membership@armclub.org.uk or via the address on the back page.

	The ARM Club Merton Court 38 Knoll Road Sidecup, Kent DA14 4QU
<hr/>	
Name: <input type="text"/>	
Membership number:	<input type="text"/>

Telephone: 07010 709849

Fax: 07970 954018

email: info@armclub.org.uk

www: <http://www.armclub.org.uk/>

Members Support: support@armclub.org.uk

Members of The ARM Club committee can be contacted as
alias@armclub.org.uk, where 'alias' can be either their first name,
or the job title (eg: 'membership')

Otherwise contact postmaster@armclub.org.uk

Site Seeing: Languages

Learning another language can be extremely useful as well as fun, so in the online information age, I decided to investigate what freely available resources there would be on the World Wide Web, which are accessible to our RISC OS browsers!

repertoire, I thought this would be a good starting point for my research. I came across **<http://www.germanfortravelers.com/>** fairly quickly. (Fig.1) I was happy to discover that the sound files used on the site to aid correct pronunciation are MP3's

Sue Clamp explores a few interesting foreign language sites

Unilang.com is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in learning a language. They list free online courses in many languages, from Afrikaans to Turkish. These are simple, text-based lessons, supported, in some cases, by audio files, which again worked fine here. In addition, there are discussion groups where you can learn a language as part of a small "class". Again there is a wide choice of languages here and I dipped into an Esperanto forum to find that it was still active. Unilang can be found at **<http://www.unilang2.org/>**.

As German has always been a bit of a weak point in my language

which played perfectly on my machine. many of the exercises also worked without problem and the categorised vocabulary lists, with sound files could be useful for the beginner. Some basic grammar rules are also simply explained on the site. More complex grammar and further exercises can be accessed by paying a subscription. It wasn't all plain sailing though, as many of the exercises I clicked on just produced a blank page and I only managed to get as far as the beginnings of the Flash-based exercises. Also on the site was a link to the very useful German <-> English Dictionary at **<http://dict.tu-chemnitz.de>** I have to say that my Spanish is



Fig. 1

rather better than my German, and I was curious when I came upon businessspanish.com (fig.2) The site's name is rather misleading as the information here could easily be used by anyone learning the language. There are daily 'lessons', verb and vocabulary lists, dialogues and a grammar section, as well as a very useful travel Spanish section included in this free

online course. One section I tried out was the one based on dialogues. Each part of the dialogue had an audio file (MP3 again) so that you could repeat the sentence. This was followed by comprehension exercises using new vocabulary. Clicking on verbs in the daily verb lists brings up a page showing the conjugation of that verb in every tense. Impressive stuff!

Taking a slightly different angle is Webspañol, (fig.3) which has a number of Spanish language resources, including a Spanish test, idioms, riddles and an audio pronunciation guide. This really

useful site can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/At hens/Thebes/6177/>

I thought that finding a site to learn French would be relatively

Invitando Amigos a Casa / Inviting Friends

Over

AUDIO: Click on an underlined word for audio; to hear the word again, click on the **PLAY** button of the audio player to maximize the use of your computer's resources. [More info.](#)


	¿Tienes algo que hacer el viernes?
<u>Gustavo</u> :	
<u>Adriana</u> :	No, no tengo nada planeado todavía.
<u>Gustavo</u> :	Quería invitarte a mi casa. Tenemos una reunión familiar. ¿Quieres venir?
<u>Adriana</u> :	Sí, me encantaría conocer a tu familia.
<u>Gustavo</u> :	¡Qué bien! También van a estar unos amigos y familiares.
<u>Adriana</u> :	¿A qué hora es la reunión?
<u>Gustavo</u> :	Trata de venir a eso de las seis para cocteles y comeremos a eso de las nueve y media.
<u>Adriana</u> :	Salgo del trabajo a las 5:30 entonces estaré en tu casa alrededor de las 6:30.
<u>Gustavo</u> :	Está bien, nos vemos el viernes.
<u>Adriana</u> :	Hasta el viernes.

Fig. 2



Webespañol

Spanish language resources on-line

m-board	chat
the test	bookstore

in association with

amazon.com

Up to 40% off books

◉ [Bookstore](#)

◉ [Chat Room](#)

◉ [Chistes](#)

◉ [Espanglés](#)

◉ [Idioms](#)

◉ [Los Beatles](#)

◉ [Message Board](#)

◉ [Newsgroups](#)

◉ [Poemas](#)

◉ [Pronounce it!](#)

◉ [Que pasa?](#)

Promoting the study and appreciation of the Spanish Language by utilizing a variety of internet resources

ACTIVITIES

NEW! Take [The Spanish Test](#) and find out your language level | A large collection of colorful [Spanish Idioms](#) with English equivalents (& online test). | Online tests using translated [Beatles](#) song lyrics | A systemized study of English-Spanish [Cognates](#) | A novel method for mastering [Irregular Verbs](#) | Speak like a native with our audio [Pronunciation](#) guide | **NEW!** Solve a mixed bag of Spanish [Riddles](#) | Visit our on-line [Bookstore](#) for the best in Spanish language study books

INTERACTIVITIES

Post your questions & comments about Spanish language study on our BUSY [Message Board](#) | Flag links to [Newsgroups](#) representing 20 Spanish-speaking countries | A collection of fresh and interesting [Phrases](#) for greeting your new amigos | Practice your Spanish [Chat](#) with native speakers on-line.

Fig. 3

[<- Back to mainpage](#)

[<- Back to Languages page](#)



FRENCH LANGUAGE COURSE

Created by [Jacques Léon](#)

Page design by [Robert Andersson](#)



* TWICE AWARDED *

NBNSOFT CONTENT AWARDS

The VERY BEST that's NEW on the NET

Fig. 4

easy, but the first two sites I visited proved to be disappointing. The sound files on “Fast and Friendly French for Fun” wouldn’t work (the links to WAV versions of the files lead nowhere!) and <http://www.ielanguages.com/french.html> was a rather dry, but nevertheless comprehensive, text only site. That’s fine if all you want is an online book, but by now I was getting used to sites that provided at least just a bit more than that, in the form of audio pronunciation guides. Eventually I found what I was looking for; a good beginner’s site with audio files at <http://www.jump-gate.com/languages/french/> (Fig. 4).

Encouraging their readers to “think different” is the Learn Dutch site at <http://www.learnndutch.org/> (Fig. 5). Here you learn the language working your way through lessons based in the fictitious ‘Crossroads Café’. “Crossroads Café is de juiste plaats om Nederlands te leren!” Using pictures with speech bubbles, you can click on the Dutch version to hear it spoken and also reveal the translation in the picture alongside.

OK, so what if even Dutch isn’t different enough for you? What about Latvian? “Learning Latvian On-line” (Fig. 6) will lead you



1
You can use the soundfiles you opened already or click the balloons to hear the Dutch.
If you want to see what they say in English click the arrow.



1
Imagine what the characters say in Dutch. If you want to hear what they say click number 1
If you only want to see the empty balloons only, click the backarrow.



Fig.5

through the first simple steps to learning Latvian, although eventually, if you want to write the language on your computer you may run into problems with fonts that display the Latvian character set. The first part of the course is very straightforward though and every part of it works on my Risc PC, except the 'active'

crossword, which requires **Internet Explorer**, but they have thoughtfully added a PDF file of this resource to download and print out. So if you want to add a few words of Latvian to your knowledge of foreign languages, head for **<http://www.codefusion.com/latvianasp/latonline.asp>**.

Learning Latvian On-line

Did you know that...
...Sveiks means Hello,Hi?

[\[About\]](#) [\[How to Use This Site\]](#) [\[Latvian Language Home\]](#)

NEW STUFF
"The Next Step" Section has reopened

How did we do?
Your [Feedback & Comments](#) Please!
(A quick Survey)

Sponsor:
codefusion

Getting Started! (No special fonts required)

Greetings Some essential words like "please" and "thankyou" and basic greetings.

About Latvian General information about the latvian language: Similar languages, Genders, use of word endings...

Alphabet Learn the alphabet and about the specially marked letters. Hear examples.

Try it! **Stuff to do! Online activities.** Review and practice the above sections: Listening practice, Quick on-line quizzes, Crossword Puzzle

The Next Step! (Latvian Fonts Required)

This section requires that you have fonts installed on your computer that can display the latvian character set. Refer to the [How to Use This Site](#) page or the [Resources](#) section for more information.

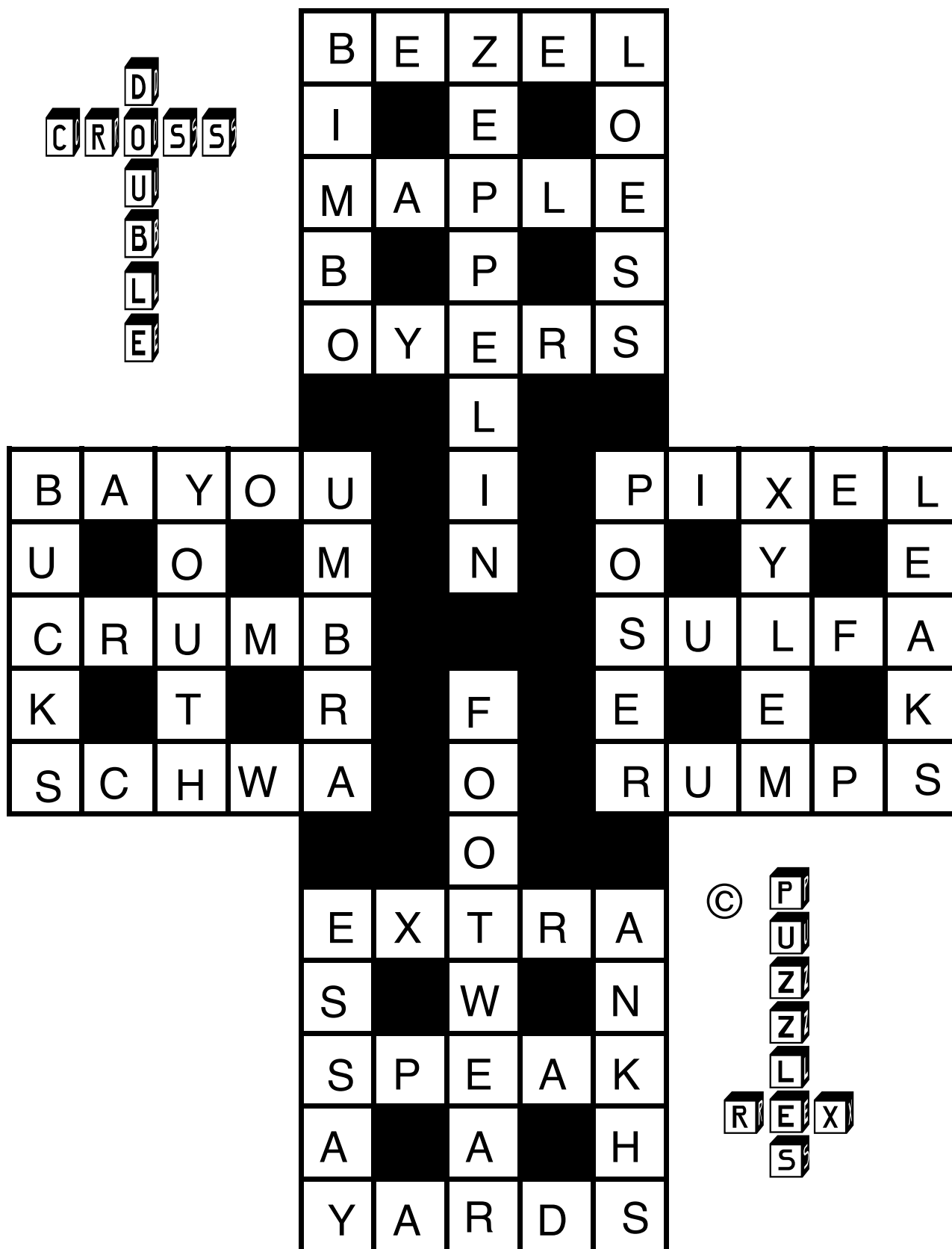
Things Start building a vocabulary: food, home, family..

What is... Some basic information so you can start expressing yourself.

Describe it Start expressing yourself! Add a few descriptive words and go!

Fig. 6

D
CROSS
UB
LE



© P
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S

ARM Arena

This is the first ARM Arena column under our new Editor Andrew Wyver and I hope this column will be able to announce at least as many developments during Andrew's time here as it did under Peter Jennings's stewardship.

least one development this month that the arrival of the Iyonix has made possible. Future possibilities include RISC OS Select on the Omega with faster XScale processors if Microdigital (the Omega's developers) can sort out their

Andrew Weston continues to look at new developments and rereleases for the RISC OS platform

Some interesting developments from Wakefield included the commitment to on going development of RISC OS 5 and the expansion of its hardware and also news of the Omega from Microdigital and the latest enhancements to RISC OS 4 in the form of RISC OS Select/Adjust.

The relevance to games players is that with all this activity in the market it can only encourage any potential games authors or converters to try their hand on the latest RISC OS technology. Indeed there is at

ARMTwister technology that is intended to permit 26bit code (e.g. RISC OS 4/Select) to run on the latest fully 32bit ARM-based processors. This would potentially bring the benefits of full support for RISC OS 4-compatible games and the greater speed to support future games-related software released for RISC OS.

On with the news...

DOSbox

As reported last month the Unix Porting Project has released a

conversion of the Linux PC emulator, **DOSbox**. This is intended to emulate PCs from the 286/386 chip era which is, roughly-speaking, around the early 1990s. The arrival of this program opens up a wide range of games titles which are listed on the **DOSbox** web-page (http://dosbox.sourceforge.net/comp_list.php?letter=a). As usual with the Unix Porting Project, support is only available to subscribers to the scheme so, for example, any requests for updates made to the Linux version of **DOSbox** to be ported to the RISC OS version could only be addressed to the developers through the channels as a subscriber.

It should be noted however that, despite there being controls to optimise the running speed, **DOSbox** is only really suitable for the Iyonix. On the other hand, without the Iyonix this conversion may well have not been embarked upon. One final point of interest to RISC OS users is that the sequel to the classic 8-bit BBC Micro game **Elite**, **Elite 2: Frontier**, which was never converted for Acorn machines is compatible with **DOSbox** and can be downloaded as shareware from

<http://www.eliteclub.co.uk> .

Aemulor and A310em

Aemulor is the application designed to allow code written for 26bit ARM chips (i.e. all those on RISC OS machines before the Iyonix) to run on the Iyonix. It has just received an overhaul and the new version, **Aemulor Pro** incorporates support for many features of older RISC OS machines that were lacking in **Aemulor**. This goes beyond full sound support but also includes features such as support for low-colour screenmodes, support for the old-style video and memory handling chips that some games accessed directly and even support for the ARM 3 processor. This signifies a broadening of objectives for the development team aiming to account for programs written as at least as far back as 1991 as well as enable more recent software that perhaps was developed for RISC OS 4 but has not been converted for the Iyonix to run. Thus, amongst the most notable beneficiaries of this widening of remit include the games-players!

A full list of compatible

software, including games is available on the **Aemulor** website. At the point of writing, the developers are working on support for screen resolutions and monitor refresh rates that are no longer found on modern monitor models. **Aemulor Pro** costs £99 for new users and £49 as an upgrade for owners of **Aemulor**. It can be ordered from the website or from your usual Acorn/RISC OS dealer.

One difference between **Aemulor** and **A310em** (discussed in detail in last month's column) is that **A310em** aims to provide as full an emulation of the whole machine as possible rather than prioritize on allowing old code to run. This, in the long run, might be of more benefit to those who want to play games from the launch of the Archimedes to the early 1990s (or later games with backwards compatibility built-in) as **A310em** is intended to support as far as is practical the idiosyncratic features of these machines. As an example, the developer of **A310em**, Jan de Boer, recently provided support for the old 4th Dimension space game, **Black Angel**, which uses a copy-protection mechanism by

virtue of a 'hidden' track on one of the game's floppy discs. By enabling **A310em's** disc reading emulation to take account of this, Jan extended the accuracy of the program.

It will be interesting to chart the progress of both programs in terms of their success in running older games whilst bearing in mind the different objectives of each package.

Re-releases

Last month, this column brought news that the range of games owned by the successor to the Eclipse brand had been reclassified as freeware and were to be released to download from Acorn Arcade in due course. Most of these games were written by Tom 'Berty' Cooper who was a one man workhorse in the early 1990s and the 3D walkabout game **Darkwood** has just been made available.

Darkwood is a mix of problem solving and exploration which alternates between 3D landscapes and room-to-room movement. The game made use of the enhanced graphics capabilities of the RiscPC whilst

maintaining compatibility with older machines. The objective is to communicate with other game characters to discover the emerging story of the game and the quest the player has to make. Much of the dialogue is quite witty and in-depth and the background scenery detailed and high quality. The story doesn't become clear initially and it is necessary to perform a few helpful tasks in your local village first merely to get the hang of the game and to set things up for later on.

The game is now supposed to be compatible with all machines from RISC OS 2 to Select although there is a bug which causes the game to crash when firing indoors under RISC OS Select. The only solution I could find was to save the game and transfer the saved-game file into **A310em** in which I had previously installed the game. On moving outdoors again I transferred a saved-game file out to the desktop again to play the game under Select. It is a shame this bug couldn't be ironed-out as, apart from the inconvenience, several of the graphics options have to be de-selected to get the game to run at a reasonable speed under

A310em (as presumably they would on older machines). The other downsides to the game are that some of the controls have to be worked out and some of the characters are poorly drawn. The latter is minor however and could even be regarded as one of the quirks of the game.

On the whole though, **Darkwood** really pushed gaming forward for RISC OS and being freely available is a bonus for all RISC OS gamers (indeed the game is reported to run under **Aemulor Pro**).

Other Berty games have been uploaded to Acorn Arcade for convenience of locating them. These are: **Lemmings**, the **Lemmings** variant and **Son of Gyrinus**, a platformer. Both games have high quality and varied Tracker-style music characteristic of early Berty games and much depth. Indeed Tracker music has a great nostalgia feel and did progress much further than the RISC OS Tracker-creation programmes catered for. It would be nice to see this extremely efficient and compact music form return to the RISC OS scene. Further Eclipse and Tom Cooper releases are being worked on or sought

as I write. Keep 'em peeled!

New magazine

A new magazine designed to capitalise on the current interest in retro-gaming is currently being sold at newsagents up and down the county. Named *Retrogamer*, issue 3 was an Acorn special which mentions Acorn machines up until the RiscPC. Hopefully this is indicative of some of the games which they will seek to re-release on cover-discs for example. The

Acorn-special issue featured a CD full of games from the publisher Gremlin (whose copyright is now owned by a successor company) of which three were BBC Micro titles. RISC OS emulators exists for many of the other platforms covered also on the CD so this magazine should be good value all round. The issue also includes a description of the most popular Acorn series of games ever, ***Repton*** written by RISC OS Ltd's Richard Hallas. Could there have been an Acorn special without ***Repton***?

Contacts

DOSbox

Unix Porting Project email: unix@chocky.org

Website: www.chocky.org/unix/downloads.html#dosbox

Aemulor

Website: www.aemulor.com

Compatibility: www.aemulor.com/compat.php

A310em

Website: <http://home-1.tiscali.nl/jandboer/>

4th Dimension

Telephone: 01903 523222

Website: www.cjemicros.co.uk/4d

Acorn Arcade downloads

www.acornarcade.com/downloads

Retrogamer

Telephone: 01625 855086

Website: www.livepublishing.co.uk/retro/

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RISC OS Rhymes

*Another poetic masterpiece from Alan Wickham's amazing
mechanical RISC OS wizard*

I have discovered, when clearing out some old files, that my machine has written another bit of verse. It has not been too well recently and seems to be feeling its age. Please find below a copy - it might be of some interest to readers.

The Middle-Aged RPC's Lament.

O, woe is me, I'm getting old
It's five long years since I was sold
And though upgraded once or twice
And added to with something nice
I fear I've something in my bytes
That maybe can't be put to rights.

I've often had a system crash
That's come upon me in a flash
I've often had my screen downsized
I often have been paralysed
But nothing have I had as yet
That can't be cured by hard reset.

But now I have a bout of woe
Not uncommon as things go
As happens often to my kind
And makes us feel we're left behind
When others come and claim affection
(Though lacking parallel connection).

My master, being rather mean,
Was loath to buy a new machine
To alleviate financial strain
Would then upgrade me once again
And purchased one day at a show
Risc OS4 to make me "glow".

Deferring to the handbook's whiles
Decided to back-up all my files
And though it brought in many risks
Moved stuff about between my discs
He thought all this would do the trick
But all it did was make me sick.

Every time that I was booted
I got an error quite unsuited
One that, by the devil devised,
Spoke of characters unrecognised.
To this it added, rather candid,
When parameters were expanded.

Upon further investigations
With AoI and Arm Club recommendations
My master thought that it was clear
The trouble lay with Socketeer
However, replacing said application
Only caused the fault's mutation.

Instead of coming during boot
It came when Socketeer was moot
And though it didn't stop it working
And Socketeer was never shirking
It was worrying a shade
And made it unwise to upgrade.

At last was found the offending file
And had been there for quite a while
Not a thing you'd look for much
And not in Socketeer as such
But buried deep in bootish choices
Where profile scripts have their voices.

Removal of an old profile
Was just the thing to make me smile
My master, of course, had no idea
Why such a thing should make me clear
But was happy that this had made
The way forward to upgrade.

Alan Wickham's RiscPC

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