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A New Broom Arrives

One otherwise quiet Saturday morning a couple of weeks ago I got a call from Carl Cramer, the publisher of Epson World and leading man at Camden Communications. Would I be interested in taking over publication of Epson World? To make a long story short, my wife Pat and I accepted, and you now have a new publisher, explaining why this issue is a tad late.

I've worked with the Epson product line and RSI both as an engineer and writer (most recently as consulting editor for EW) since the QX-10 was introduced in the US in 1983, and know first hand some of the expectations, triumphs and frustrations felt by so many in the Epson and Rising Star community.

So, what can you expect from Epson World in the future? First, each issue should now leave our printer around the 25th of the month. Next month you'll see major changes in the layout and editorial material of Epson World.

Our new layout will pack as much (or more) material into our 48 pages as we used to print on 64. In addition to "meaty" applications articles, we're starting several departments including the Valdocs Chronicles, the MS-DOS Express, and the Language Laboratory along with tips and reports gathered from user group newsletters and bulletin boards across the country. You'll see increased coverage on desktop publishing and portable computing, and you'll still find technical articles like how to add more disk drives to your QX-10, build a color board switch arrangement for your QX-16 or troubleshoot your computer before sending it in for repair.

We are also opening up a low-cost way for user groups and individuals to advertise in Epson World. Finnegan's Flea Market will let you advertise (almost) anything you can describe inside a one by two inch box (\$50 per issue). The classified section gives you 4 lines for \$20 per issue. You can give us your Finnegan ad copy as little as 10 days before EW is mailed from the printers. Contact us at (603) 487-2500 for more details.

We've just installed a bulletin board at (603) 487-2051 for your use. Use it to order your subscription renewals, place your Finnegan ads, send in manuscripts, ask questions, cast poisonous barbs, etc. It has a 20 megabyte hard disk on line, so rummage around...you can never tell what goodies may be lurking about.

Times and Epson World are changing, and I think for the better. Our goal is to provide you with a national forum that draws the Epson community together, making your computing easier, more productive, and perhaps even fun. No hints, but check "After Hours" in our next issue.

Jim Hansen

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Contributors: Manuscripts and photographs are welcomed. Publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts, queries or artwork.

Subscriptions are \$32 for 12 issues. User group subscription rates available. Please inquire for delivery rates outside the U.S.. Dealer inquiries invited.

ISSN 8755-1047

WHY GET BURNED AGAIN?

Your May edition is replete with pleas by RSI and Chris Rutkowski to buy V+ III. Buy before we die. Last Chance Cafe. Sad. But why should those of us who want a better word processing system have to shell out \$350 for a five-foot shelf of accounting and drawing programs that we don't want or need?

I have had two QX-10s since 1983 and never used anything other than the word processor. I suspect this is the case for many QX owners. Indeed, the QX was marketed precisely as a word processor and celebrated as one that could be used right out of the box without costly tutorials or a Ph.D. in computerese. In that sense, it was a splendid machine.

Tragically, Epson and Rising Star, having created a marketing niche and a loyal following, promptly abandoned it for a higher calling, i.e., creating an all-purpose system that would, to borrow a phrase from Garcia Marquez, "sew buttons and cure fevers."

If Valdocs 1.18 proved to be slow and indifferent to commands, Valdocs 2 proved to be a disaster; a diskette eater and fountain of error messages. Why then should we burn our fingers on V+ III?

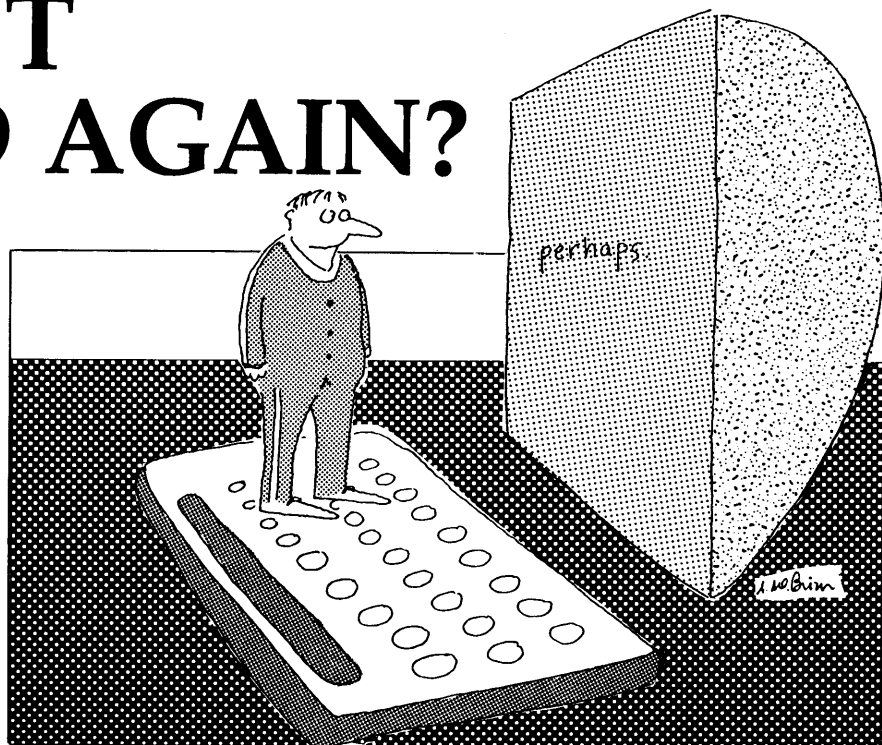
Alfred Pakula
Portland, Maine

Well, I Like It

My compliments on your May issue of Epson World. I'd like to extend my old Epson Connection subscription.

I read Jim Hansen's article, "Build it at Home" with special interest since I began searching last week for a low-cost parallel cable switch for my two printers. Since you covered a serial cable switch in this article, how about following up with a parallel solution?

I liked Richard Shoemaker's



approach in "Choosing WordStar" of matching software programs with applications. I have used many of the programs Richard described.

I look forward to future issues of Epson World.

Jim Olney, Jr.
Seattle

On the Other Hand

My first and last issue of Epson World has just arrived.

You state on page 3 of your May issue, "there are at least 35,000 QX owners out there ... and we will continue a strong editorial voice in support of you and your computers." Yet, whatever purpose you purport, three others are seemingly demonstrated and go without mention: 1. Sink RSI, 2. Badmouth Val+, 3. Convert QX-10/16 owners to orphan machine owners, MS-DOS, or both.

Consider a few examples:

1. Mr. Strukhoff states on page 20, "the paper devoted in trade magazines to trashing the QX-10 and Valdocs — based mostly on the

system's glacial speed — put warm food in the bellies of many a logger's family." How does Mr. Strukhoff's other article beginning on page 24, "Val?," differ from these? It doesn't.

It is hardly just and has, apparently, the sole purpose of sowing doubt regarding Val+ in the minds of readers — or sinking RSI, for the article is wholly negative to both. Neither deserves it.

Val+ is the best integrated system I have worked with and the personnel at Rising Star among the most cooperative and helpful that I have dealt with in any field.

2. Mr. Hansen is concerned on page 7 with the fiscal integrity of RSI based on a company supported by limited users. Really? Simple arithmetic indicates that sales of Val+ would be adequate to insure the survival of the corporation and the development of new products; i.e., 20,000 Val+ sales would generate almost \$7,000,000 in revenues.

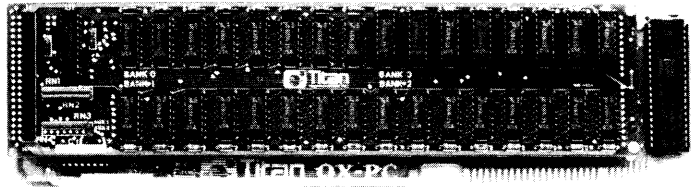
3. Mention is also made by Mr. Strukhoff of Richard Shoemaker — president of the National Epson QX-10 User's Group — calling a national boycott of RSI. If he or his members,

Continued on page 42



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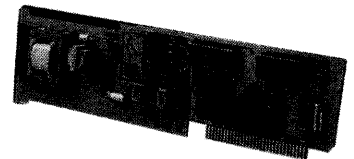
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Comrex-420cps Printer	995.00		Color monitor (Comrex 6600) RGB for QX-16 or IBM	399.00	189.95
QX-10 Book, Barian	7.95		Comrex 6700 Hi Res monitor	499.00	329.00
QX-10's, used , usually available at	650.00		Both the above work in the MS-DOS Mode Only		
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			Zork II, Adv.	49.95	19.95
			Microplan Spreadsheet	495.00	89.95
			Personal Pearl Data Base	299.00	99.95
			Spell Star spelling checker	250.00	89.95
			Mail Merge	250.00	75.00
			both above for H Wordstar File Plan Data Base	295.00	29.95
			Chang Labs	295.00	29.95
			Valpaint, Valdraw** with mouse	495.00	199.95
			dBase II Hasci	499.00	139.95
			CPM 80 2.25B	29.00	29.00
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QX-16 FINDS NEW LIFE

"Sometimes I will, and then again I think I won't." So ran a line from a Chuck Berry hit of many years ago, and so runs the story line of the Epson QX-16. The QX-16 was introduced slightly more than a year ago and was touted for its ability to run Valdocs and CP/M with its trusty Z80 microprocessor and MS-DOS with its Intel 8088 co-processor. It appeared to be Epson's way of accommodating the de facto MS-DOS business computing microcomputer standard, but the machine was dropped in less than six months as Epson moved completely to MS-DOS with its Equity series of IBM PC clones. The QX-16 was liquidated, its price dropped into the basement, and now sales are steady from a number of dealers throughout the country.

New interest in the QX-16 is coincident with the release of Valdocs+ III, the "Valdone" version of the Valdocs computing environment. Epson World has had time to take preliminary looks at V+ III (see article in this issue), and plans to run a Valdocs+ III forum over the next several months, as the nuances of this 10-disk integrated program are discovered. Interest in the QX-16 also brings some hope to the community of stubborn CP/M program developers out there.

Val-Ware Off and Running

Bob Georgius, who along with Steven Kray is leading the effort by Val-Ware Distributors to sell Valdocs+ III, said in mid-June that sales have been strong, but "we need to get the word out even more about Valdocs+ III." Val-Ware Distributors obtained exclusive distribution rights to all Valdocs implementations from Rising Star earlier this year. Val-Ware's primary business right now is selling Valdocs+ III, both by itself and

bundled with the QX-16; Georgius said Val-Ware shipped 1,000 Val+ III packages in the first eight weeks of its availability.

The number of QX systems in use is around 50,000, and Georgius hopes the word about Val+ III can reach them all. "Basically, I'm looking at the entire installed base of QX systems as the universe for Val+ III sales," he said.

Val-Ware has sold a number of Val+ III packages to dealers throughout the country, and is also selling Pro System 10- and 20-megabyte hard disks for use with the QX-10 and 16. "We're not advertising this fact right now, but we'll also sell anything from the RSI catalog, from RSI BASIC on up," Georgius added. One product that remains in the hands of RSI, though, is Valdocs 2.03, the third "bug fix" to Valdocs 2. RSI was beta testing Val 2.03 in mid-June, and will work with Epson to distribute it to Valdocs 2 owners.

Driver's Seat

While on the subject of the QX-16, it's instructive to review a critical component, the disk drive. EpsOnLine has featured some discussions about drives, and Epson World receives periodic letters and phone calls from both Equity buyers and new QX-16 owners about what disks work with what drives, what drives read what disks, what drives each system has, etc.

The original IBM PC had a size drive now known as full height, taking up the entire available vertical space on the front of the system. It read single-sided floppy disks. Most disks today are double sided, and the standard MS-DOS floppy capacity is 360K, also designated by the term "double density." Thus, a double-sided, double-density disk is indicated by DSDD. The standard disk drive size today is "half height,"

as found on IBM PCs and most compatibles, including the Epson Equity series.

The QX-10's drives are "one-third height" drives, reading double-density disks. With the QX-16, Epson installed half-height drives, but they read quad density disks that can hold about 720K of data. (The Tandy 2000 system, an unorthodox system that runs MS-DOS on the Intel 80186 microprocessor, also uses quad density drives.)

The IBM PC AT (and Equity III) feature yet another floppy drive that reads "high density" floppy disks containing up to 1.2 megabytes of data.

Now, a QX-10 one-third height, double-density drive will work in the QX-16, but the 16 really wants quad density, so this is not a particularly good idea. Similarly, the 1.2MB AT-type drives will read 360K disks, but there have been problems when these drives write to such a disk. Quad density drives will read double-density disks, and double-density drives will read old single-density disks. Look for an article in a future issue of Epson World discussing the confusing number of disk options available to the user who wants to shop around. Otherwise, to ensure absolute data incorruptibility, match up the drives you have on your system to the proper disks.

Chris Says ...

Meanwhile, back at Rising Star, things have calmed down a bit, but Valdocs developer and RSI president Chris Rutkowski is not happy by everything he sees. Rutkowski said "paying bills" remains one of RSI's top priorities, but added that RSI is also busy filling back orders for mice and Val+ updates. Rutkowski said there are "very few" customers remaining who ordered the mouse but haven't yet received it, and hoped to complete this task in the

near future. There are between 3,500 and 4,000 back orders for Val+ updates, he said. About 1,000 of those were to have been taken care of by the end of June, according to Rutkowski, with the rest steadily handled as quickly as possible.

Rutkowski had some interesting things to say about events in the past and plans for the future. First, the past. Rutkowski said he had some reservations about an article in the May issue of *Epson World* (Past, Present, Future, p. 7), written by consulting editor Jim Hansen. Note was made in this article of RSI's extensive cost-cutting late in 1985, including severe personnel cuts, and RSI's marketing strategy was questioned. Rutkowski pointed out that Hansen is an ex-RSI employee (having been laid off), and felt that fact should have been mentioned.

"We're still here, and we're doing better than we were," Rutkowski said. "I didn't like making the layoffs we had to make to keep RSI afloat, but they had to be made."

Rutkowski also had some unfavorable opinions of Epson's recent strategy. "Epson fell on its face (with the QX machines) because there are market niches it just doesn't understand," Rutkowski said.

Rutkowski said RSI and Val-Ware offered to sell Epson 30,000 copies of Valdocs+ III at \$50 apiece in mid-May, but the offer was rejected. "I figured, send us the \$1.5 million to help us take care of old debts, then send the Val+ copies free to all QX owners, but Epson wasn't interested," Rutkowski said. Rutkowski quoted Gene Kunde, newly appointed general manager of Epson America as saying "software support of the QX is not part of corporate strategy."

Kunde confirmed Rutkowski's latter statement, saying "Epson is not in the software development or marketing business anymore. We're not good at it, and we found it requires a level of after-sale software support that's best left to the developer. We've decided to leave software development for all machines — Equity, QX, PX-8, HX-20, or any system — to software developers."

Kunde could not confirm any price or quantity regarding the offer mentioned by Rutkowski, but he did say "RSI and Val-Ware had talked to Epson about a product which at that time did not exist."

Rutkowski has plans for a future

installation of Valdocs on a zippier machine than the QX-10. "The QX-10 is not an old-fashioned machine in terms of architecture, just in terms of the Z80 microprocessor," he said. One option he's looking at is a design from SemiDisk outlined in the products department of this issue of *Epson World*. This system uses an Hitachi chip and dense circuit design to create an environment "that would run Valdocs 10 times faster than it presently runs," Rutkowski said.

Whatever the plan, it will entail building a new computer, Rutkowski said. "Of course, we need either a developer or the financial backing from someone" to make the project go, he added.

Rutkowski again asserted he is not planning to port Valdocs to the IBM PC. "That would be an exercise in futility," he said. "The IBM PC is well-established as the Model T of the industry ... and I don't mean that cynically. But I'm looking to go beyond that."

Speaking of automobiles, Rutkowski used a few good car analogies to describe Valdocs+ III and the entire Valdocs experiment. When asked "who was the intended audience for Valdocs," he said "the problem we confront is that certain individuals like a Chevy Nova, but (someone else) wants a Porsche. It depends on the freight you're hauling, where it's going, etc." When asked about the well-reported slowness of some Valdocs applications, especially on floppy-based systems, he said, "if you're a professional writer, what do you mean you don't have a hard disk? How about a SemiDisk?" Rutkowski further elaborated that Valdocs becomes many things to many people, but he really thinks it was written "with 95 percent of current computer users" in mind.

A Straight Line

As mentioned in *Epson World* before, the EpsOnLine electronic user's group, accessible with a modem through the CompuServe information utility, engenders some interesting discussions about QX computing matters. One of the more interesting discussions recently involved the QX-16's monitor. It seemed that a dealer, Bill Stoebig (CompuServe ID 75126,1154) noticed that one batch of QX-16 monitors had

model number 612A, while a previous batch had model number 602A. Stoebig noted that the 612As came with the hard-drive versions of the machine.

Super-sleuth Mike Morra (76703,4051), known in the group as an ace detective, eventually found out that the 612 (or Q612) was originally shipped with Epson's QX-11 MS-DOS value-added reseller (VAR) system, but "seems to be functionally the same as the Q602!" Morra theorized that the monitors are identical except for small cosmetic differences.

But two separate manufacturing runs with parts supplied by different manufacturers were apparently made to accommodate the QX-11, a machine that normally has a small, 5-inch monitor. Morra concluded that there should be no problem with either monitor on the QX-16, that "for accounting and billing purposes, a similar product can end up with two codes like that, depending on how they're being marketed and priced."

While getting to the bottom of the QX-16 monitor riddle, Morra also mentioned that there are two keyboards for the QX-16. One has a spongy feel (like the original QX-10 keyboard) and the other has more resistance in the keys, "much like the updated QX-10 keyboard," Morra said.

Equity Strong, Kunde Says

Gene Kunde, general manager of Epson America, said Equity sales "reached record levels in May" and in fact "exceeded the forecast" for that month. Epson follows the traditional industry policy of not releasing exact sales figures, but Kunde said he "is feeling good" about retailers' and the public's perception of the Equity.

Kunde acknowledged that price cutting moves by IBM "have an impact that puts pressure on the (entire) marketplace" and that Epson has reacted by cutting prices of its own systems. But Kunde said Epson has not cut prices "just because of IBM." He also pointed out that Epson "does not (necessarily) want to be known as the price leader" in the MS-DOS marketplace, but rather, customers "should perceive high value in our systems." ●

EPSON PRINTER TARGETS BUSINESS

The latest printer offering from Epson America, the EX-800, is a nine-pin dot-matrix printer rated at a top speed of 300 characters per second (cps). Priced at \$749, the EX-800 is the first printer from Epson designated with the "EX" prefix. It is aimed squarely at business applications, featuring a color option for business graphics, and IBM printer emulation.

The EX-800 is an 80-column printer with an eight-button typestyle selection panel and Epson's latest paper feeding features. The selection panel has buttons labeled "draft," "pica," "elite," "normal," "NLQ roman," "NLQ sans serif," "proportional" and "condensed." The EX-800 operates at 54 cps in near-letter quality mode with elite text. For pica text, the printer hits 250 cps in draft and 45 cps in NLQ mode.

Epson America, Computer Products Div., 2780 Lomita Blvd., Torrance, CA 90505, (213) 539-9140.

Circle No. 81



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The Software Store, 706 Chippewa Square, Marquette, MI 49855, (906) 228-7622.

Circle No. 90

Super Semi

SemiDisk Systems, developer of the popular 512K and 2MB RAMdisk boards for the Epson QX-10, has announced a new product that is designed to be the fastest, most powerful CP/M and Z-system computer ever built, according to SemiDisk president Jim Bell. This is not something that QX-10 or 16 owners would be interested in for their systems, but represents the latest in one area of computer development. Bell stresses that despite this system's 8-bit technology, it is most definitely not a

"home brew" computer.

Inspired by the cult classic, Douglas Adam's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the system's main board is called Deep Thought 42, or DT42. It has 512K of dynamic RAM, four RS-232 channels, and a floppy disk controller that will handle as many as eight drives of various sizes simultaneously. There is a video interface, SASI channel for high-speed devices, parallel printer interface, and two spare erasable programmable ROM (EPROM) sockets. The system can run at more than 12 megahertz and uses a four-layer printed circuit board.

The co-board is a SemiDisk board with 8 megabytes of dynamic RAM — four times the memory found on the largest SemiDisk for the QX-10 — made out of 256K memory chips. The co-board also will have a voice record/reply capability.

Mastering Communications

Mastercom is the name of a \$49 smart terminal and file transfer utility from The Software Store. The software is written to perform four basic functions: turn a micro into a host time-sharing terminal, capture data onto a disk or printer from other computer sources, send files from disk to other systems, transfer files with an error-correcting protocol.

Features include auto dial; auto answer; host mode unattended operation; directory display; batch transfer; wild card file specification; single-key stored responses; filter or ASCII display; on-line selection and revision of communications parameters; and file view, rename and file erase. A number of protocol

SemiDisk Systems Inc., PO Box GG,
Beaverton, OR 97075, (503) 626-3104.
Circle No. 89

Mail Management

Mail-Track-II is an updated version of a mailing list management program from Sapana Micro Software. The program is menu-driven and allows as many as 24 fields to be created for each address. It can print mailing labels in many formats (Avery, Cheshire, etc.) and compile reports as well.

A built-in option, LetterMergell, allows printing of personalized form letters.

The program can handle as many as 32,766 addresses in a data file. Users can browse through addresses forward and backward in address

entry and ZIP/Postal code order. Single or multiple fields may be sorted in major or minor order.

The program will work with a RAMdisk to speed things up.

The price of Mail-Track-II is \$95 in the standard, unprotected version. Users may obtain a copy-protected version for \$120. The program requires MS-DOS 2.00 or higher and 256K RAM.

Sapana Micro Software, 1305 South Rouse, Pittsburg, KS 66762, (316) 231-5023.

Circle No. 87

Daily Serial

Local area networks have been touted for many years as a great leap forward for business microcomputer users. The problem is standards are hard to come by and costs remain high. One company, Applied

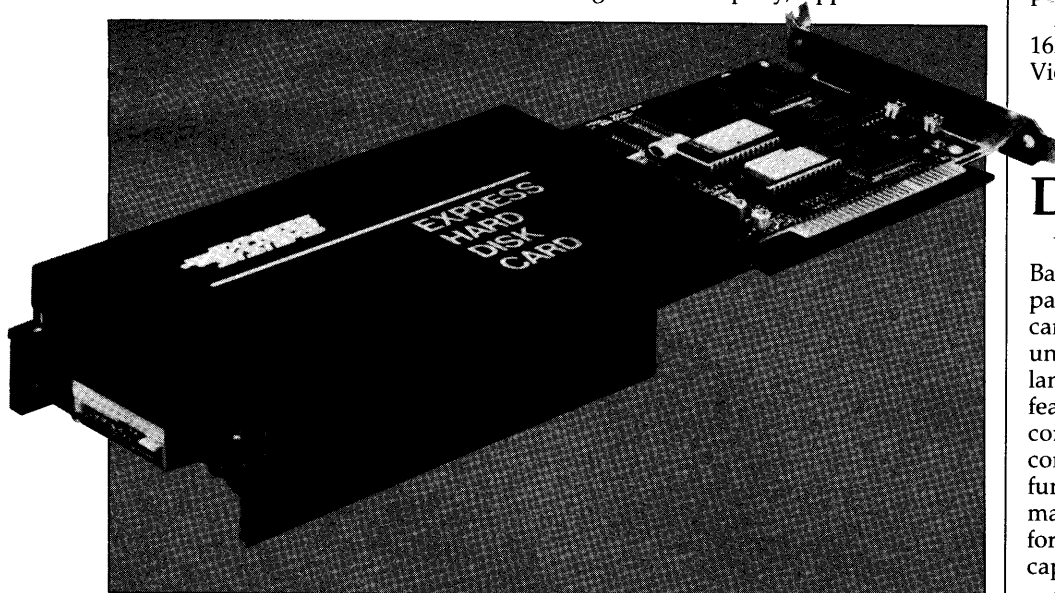
Knowledge Groups, is addressing the latter concern with the Knowledge Network, available for \$99 per system. This price may be a bit deceptive, since users need to have a modem installed to run the network. But with a modem, communications can proceed at remote sites as needed.

This network uses memory-resident software, telephone wire and the RS-232 serial interface to accomplish its task. There is no prescribed network topology. Security and data integrity measures include error checking and data acknowledgement, write protection and selective access for printers and disk drives.

By using the RS-232, transmission speeds are quite slow by networking standards, but the manufacturer says Knowledge Network is designed to share hard disks, RAMdisks, tape drives, CD-ROMs and, of course, printers.

Applied Knowledge Groups Inc., 1622 El Camino Real West, Mountain View, CA 94040, (415) 965-1300.

Circle No. 84



Hard Guys

The hard drive board is increasingly prominent in today's microcomputer realm. One of the latest developments comes from Express Systems and its family of seven DiskCards, ranging from 20 to 60 megabytes in capacity and \$449 to \$1,095 in price. Despite a rather unfortunate choice of names, the boards are fast: Access speeds range from 60 to 80 microseconds, and data is transferred at rates between 5 and 7.5 megabits per second. For an extra \$95, a DiskCard can be combined with an existing hard disk as an

expansion of that disk; both act as one.

Available for the entry level card is a program called File Compactor, which compresses binary files by 30 to 35 percent, text files 40 to 50 percent, and database files as much as 90 percent.

A data backup program, DS Backup, is free for the asking with all cards.

Express Systems Inc., 1254 Remington Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60195, (800) 341-7549.

Circle No. 85

Don't Talk Back

Version 1.2 of LaSalle Micro's BackComm communications software package is priced at \$95. The program can encrypt and decrypt, squeeze and unsqueeze files, and has a "command language" called BackTalk that features 52 commands. The commands provide basic communications, as well as arithmetic functions and evaluation, decision making, disk file read/write, screen formatting, and interfacing capabilities.

A background mode enables BackComm to remain operational while another application is running in the foreground. One example would be to pre-program the software to check on stock markets throughout the day while the user performs other tasks.

The program presents a menu-driven approach, but can be switched to direct commands as the user gains more experience.

The program can use ASCII, X-PC, and variations of XMODEM protocols to establish links.

LaSalle Micro Inc., 1350W Remington Rd., Schaumburg, IL 60195, (800) 882-5171.

Circle No. 86

RAMPING UP

Using Valdocs+ II with a SemiDisk is a good move.

By Bruce Harrison

It's well worth pointing out at the start of any discussion of the SemiDisk that this board is not for everyone. QX-10 users with large text files may well find that the storage capacity of a hard disk drive has advantages over the smaller capacity of the RAMdisk approach of the SemiDisk. The speed of a hard disk will come close to that provided by a RAMdisk and it will provide far more storage for files in TPM, CP/M and MS-DOS (if you have a Titan board) — something the SemiDisk just cannot do.

That said, if you're still in the dual floppy drive world, use Valdocs+ II as your word processor of first choice, and have a collection of small files easily handled or stored on floppy disks, then the speed and workspace provided by a battery backup 2-megabyte SemiDisk will make Valdocs an even greater pleasure to use.

Notice I said 2-megabyte SemiDisk. I'm tickled pink that I got the larger option rather than the 512K version. With four times the capacity (and users are always amazed at how their work always seems to fill the space available) at a price premium of less than 70 percent, the 2-megabyte SemiDisk is worth its weight in gold.

FIRST OFF ...

With a 2-megabyte RAMdisk installed in your own QX-10 you'll never have to contend with swapping disks, utility or help disks again. The only time you'll be swapping disks is to back up files just in case the power to the board is interrupted for six hours or more, or to archive inactive files off to floppy disks for storage purposes.

Your system will load in less than 50 seconds from power-on. All the Valdocs modules will be available to you without changing disks — even Valdraw and Valpaint, if you have

them. Transferring pictures and graphs to the Editor will be almost effortless.

If you occasionally use other CP/M or TPM programs, they can be loaded too, ready to use without a disk change if you like. Be aware that some CP/M programs will not operate completely — or at all in some cases — under "raw" TPM, when you've exited to TPM from the Valdocs menu key. Other CP/M programs will not run quite correctly when selected from the Valdocs menu of

Transferring pictures and graphs to the Editor will be almost effortless.

applications option under the menu key, because Valdocs is still resident and in control in the background while the CP/M application is running.

A case in point is the Indexer Utility provided with the CP/M 2.25 release from Epson. When run from raw TPM, the arrow keys will not function correctly, but the space bar and return keys will allow you to scan through a directory display. But if run from within Valdocs as an application, the arrow keys will work. In either case you will have to press "H" instead of the Help key, and only user area 0 listings will be displayed on non-default drives, regardless of your user area selection. To display user areas other than 0, it's best to log on to the drive of the user area you wish to display, then run INDEXER.COM.

You will have to experiment a bit to find out which CP/M programs run correctly under raw TPM-III or with Valdocs still in the background. When

arrow keys or special HASCI keys are inoperative there are usually other keys that will accomplish the same thing.

INSTALLATION AND AFTER

The directions for installing the SemiDisk board are easy to follow. From there you boot Valdocs normally. You will notice that Valdocs+ II will automatically acknowledge the presence of the RAMdisk board and load the index overlay file into it as it initializes the system. If you have the spreadsheet and editor overlay files on your load disk, they will also be automatically placed into RAM along with the index overlay. You do not need to have them on your load disk, however, to set up your system for use with the 2-megabyte SemiDisk board. (Users with the 512K SemiDisk will have three overlays on the load disk.)

Once Valdocs has loaded, simply press the Copydisk key and select the <N>on-Indexed Copy, Delete option. Copy all of the contents of Drive A to Drive MO. (Select <M>ore than one and press the Retrieve key to make it easier.) Once the copying has finished, repeat the process for the Run 2 disk, the Load disk, the Valdraw and Valpaint disks if you have them, and optionally, the Utilities disk if you make frequent use of any of its programs.

To be sure, there is plenty of room to copy everything to the SemiDisk board, but conserving space on this electronic disk will allow you to make use of several pre-defined user areas in your workspace as discussed later on.

After the copying process is completed, back out of the Copydisk program and press the Menu key. Insert the Load Disk in Drive A and select <S>etup. Under <V>aldocs System Characteristics, choose drive M for both the System Disk and Data

Disk options. A brief message, "Checking M Drive," will appear. Also choose 0 for both the System User and Data User options.

Make sure that the Indexer, Editor and Spreadsheet overlay options are all set to <S>ystem Disk. This is where many people have gone wrong. Drive M is your system disk now, not simply a memory disk.

Finally, choose your experience level and startup program as you wish. I recommend <E>xpert so you can utilize TPM programs, and <A> Editor, which allows you to make interesting use of the Control-V windows.

After completing the setup procedure, exit to the Editor and enter a Control-M, <C>hange Data Disk, and reboot the system. Place your load disk in Drive A; Drive B can be empty. After initialization, the System Disk will be Drive M and you'll be ready to go.

You will have to keep your load disk in Drive A in order to provide the system tracks to Valdocs. There are no tracks 0 and 1 on the SemiDisk. Occasionally, when changing modules, for example, you'll see Valdocs refer to the TPM tracks on Drive A as the drive's light glows briefly.

Some people choose to make their Data Drive/User Area "M1." I don't, because I keep my calendar on the system side of things. On the other side, I have set up three user areas. Area 1 is set aside for articles published in my newsletter, the Central Maine Epson User's Group (CMEUG); Area 2 is set aside for personal correspondence; Area 3 is set aside for business-related documentation.

I have created four user-defined keystroke macros to allow me to move from one user area to another. Grouping files in such a manner will make it easier to back them up since unrelated files are in separate areas. Backups will consist of similar data and files, and can be backed up all at once to avoid a "pick and choose" session. If necessary, a backup file can be retrieved if it has been grouped with similar files or in some other logical manner.

A word of caution about back ups: Be aware of the collective size of all the files you are backing up. Your disk might not be able to hold everything you have in any given user area. While you can tag several files to copy in the Valdocs Copydisk

utility, it does not give you a tagged files size. You must track this yourself and make sure it does not exceed the capacity of your disk.

As one becomes more and more expert within the Valdocs environment, the help files need no longer remain on the SemiDisk. Taking them off of MO frees up an additional 228K of space.

Even more space can be gained by removing unneeded printer files. For example, if you do not have an Epson LQ-1500 printer attached to your system, there is no need to have LQ1500.STL or LQSIDE.STL files on Drive MO. Removing them will add another 17.5K. If you do not use the Mail program or the Scheduler, additional space can be freed up there.

Your goal in removing unneeded files should be to approach an amount of free space totaling or exceeding the number of pre-defined user areas you wish to set up times the storage capacity of a QX-10 disk (376K). So if you have three active user areas to set up, as I do, you should try to keep about 1.1 megabytes (1,100K) free to serve as your working space.

There is, fortunately, a happy middle ground between having files online on Drive M and offline on a stored floppy. This middle ground is the load disk in Drive A. After you've configured your system for the SemiDisk, only five files are required to be present on the load disk in order for Valdocs to switch over to Drive M successfully. These files are INDX.CHN, INITIAL.INI, LOADUP.CHN, RESTART.LSYS and SYSINIT.CHN. With only these files present on your load disk, some 300K of space is available for occasional use. Be sure to make a copy of your load disk before deleting any files.

In addition, you could place the help files on the load disk; then if you occasionally need to use them they will already be in Drive A. When you press the Help key, Valdocs checks the system disk (Drive MO) and doesn't find the help file. It prompts you to place the appropriate disk in Drive A and press any key. Since HELPO.HLP and HELP3.HLP are already in Drive A, you simply press any key and you're there. This double-key approach can be taken with any of the Valdocs modules you do not wish to have taking up RAMdisk space but would like to have nearby.

On the other hand, you might wish to place some of the Valdocs utility programs on the load disk — I have LIST.SYS and ZPIP.SYS on it — or perhaps a frequently used CP/M program like PeachCalc or Spelling Proofreader, which can be selected from the <A>pplications Menu or chosen from the TPM prompt.

In all of this, a battery backup unit is essential. Don't get a 2-megabyte SemiDisk without one. The battery backup is for the card, not the computer. It provides current when the QX-10 is turned off, and will provide six hours of backup power in the event your power goes off.

HOW ABOUT CP/M?

The approach I've taken to using my RAMdisk is one of dedicated Valdocs use. I don't plan to use it for CP/M at the moment, since I almost always choose to work from within the integrated Valdocs environment. If you do wish to use the SemiDisk with CP/M your approach could be quite different from mine.

For those interested in using the SemiDisk with CP/M, there are a few things to know. If you buy your RAMdisk from RSI you will not receive any software to allow CP/M to recognize the RAMdisk — such software is built into Valdocs. You will instead have to purchase the necessary software from SemiDisk Technologies, for about \$30.

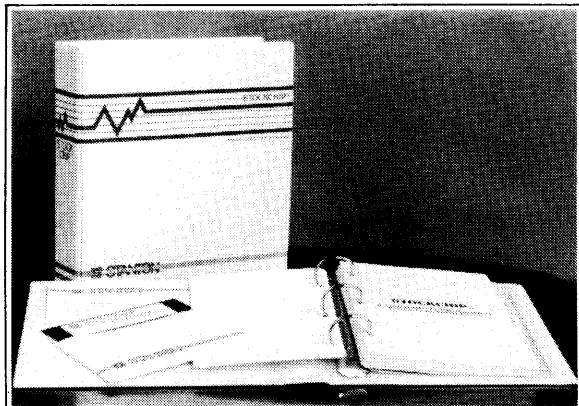
Be aware that many users caution against trying to run both Valdocs and CP/M on the SemiDisk board. To me it doesn't matter, as my serious work is done exclusively with Valdocs. If you use the board with CP/M, make sure your Setup for Valdocs indicates Drive A as the system drive and Drive B as the data drive. And check with RSI once in awhile to find out what new RAMdisk information might be available about enabling both operating systems to share the board.

Also remember that Valdocs has many different implementations. There are differences in the way Valdocs 2 and Valdocs+ store setup information on the system tracks (0 and 1), for example.

Valdocs+ II is a whole new system with a 2-megabyte RAMdisk. It's quiet, it's faster, and it requires almost no disk swapping. Whether or not you opt for a RAMdisk or a hard disk depends on the use to which your computer is put. But for my applications, it's a winner. ●

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continued from page 6

as individuals, do not wish to purchase RSI products, that is their prerogative.

They do not, however, speak for me. And I take personal offense at a quasi-independent organization that so wishes to influence other QX-10 owners or dictate consumer policy.

4. Lastly, Mr. Strukhoff also states that "Epson QX owners ... are starting to doubt RSI's ability to get the job done." No one who has used Val+ would have these doubts. Val+ is adequate demonstration of the falsity of such contentions.

To continue is to belabor the issue. Yet be assured that you have secured three results: Epson World has lost a subscriber, Mr. Shoemaker's group has lost a probable member (boycotts work two ways), and Epson America has for current and future products lost a loyal customer.

Donald J. Bennett
Hamtramck, Michigan

More Frustration

After reading the comments about Rising Star in the May issue of Epson World, I find I must speak out. I have experienced inadequate and inexcusable service from Rising Star.

In November of 1985 I ordered Valdocs+ through the National Epson User's Group (NEUG) using a credit card. When the order had not arrived by the end of January 1986, I called Rising Star directly. I was told that Rising Star had no order for me from NEUG. RSI said NEUG had been losing orders and that they would be glad to take a credit card order and forward Valdocs+ immediately with a mouse back ordered. This I did.

I received my January order promptly. Then, two weeks later I received a second order; obviously, the NEUG order. The second order, also without a mouse, I returned with a cover letter through UPS. Now at the end of May I have yet to receive reimbursement of the second order or a mouse.

I was told over the phone around May 1 that a check would be issued in the next 10 days or that we would be called. But I have received no credit slip, check, or mouse. Nor have I received a phone call.

I want Rising Star to succeed. I really like the company's products,

MAILBOX

when delivered. However, in good conscience I cannot suggest anyone order from Rising Star at this time.
 Peggy L.T. Garrison
 Skokie, Illinois

Now Listen Up

I'm sure all Epson/Valdocs lovers are extremely pleased that you've picked up the torch for Epson owners and Valdocs users. We hope you will not forget us. We may be small in number, but the loyalty in our buying power is proven, and cannot be ignored.

My wife and I are completely happy with Valdocs+ and the two computers in our household that use this program exclusively. Moreover, we are, and forever will be, in the market for any program that utilizes the full capabilities of the HASCI/Valdocs system.

We are very *displeased* with two things. One, Epson's total abandonment of the TPM/Valdocs concept, in which we have a considerable investment. And two, your magazine's obvious slant to Epson's new direction. The question: are you going to be just another manufacturer-sponsored computer rag, or will you develop an independent editorial view, including any and all warranted criticism of your namesake?

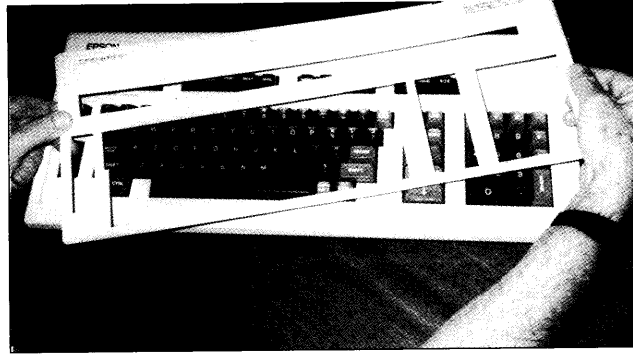
The reality is that marketing always wins, right? IBM won the war, and Epson surrendered. So what happens to us refugees? Those of us who fought with hard-earned dollars because we believed in a bright new computer philosophy called Valdocs. What we're left with is another casualty, RSI, perhaps fatally crippled by IBM's marketing thugs and the gutless wonders at Epson.

Thank God for Chris Rutkowski. Maybe he'll surface again. When he does, I hope he remembers his devotees — people like my wife and me — who depend and thrive on a human/computer interface called HASCI/Valdocs, which as far as we're concerned has left all the others in the dust.

One more thing. IBM-cloners really have no need for your magazine. Your future subscription base lies in the people who really need you. Take a stand, and we'll stand with you. Surrender to Big Blue, and we're history!

John L. Polk

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VDO25.LBR — VDO (Video Display Oriented) Editor is a small (7K) ASCII file full screen editor.

TOUR20.LBR — TOUR is an outline processor much like the commercial programs MaxThink and OutThink. It can help you collect and organize your thoughts.

ESD-24 MS-DOS Miscellaneous

BRADFORD.ARC — Fancy Font type of program that allows near-letter quality printing on Epson,

IBM, and Gemini printers in several fonts.

PC-SPELLARC — Primitive, but efficient. **SPELLER.ARC** — Like the above spell checker, it also makes a separate file of misspelled words, instead of marking words in the file itself.

FRED.LBR — A Free EDitor. Fast but limited. **FC101.LBR** — An easy to use spreadsheet that offers a good introduction to spreadsheet concepts.

STARSHIP.ARC — A 'real-time' Star Trek game.

ESD-25 MS-DOS Communications

These programs will run on the Titan board and the Equity, but not the QX-16.

QMODEM20.ARC — Easy to use, but very powerful. It is one of the most popular MS-DOS communications programs.

ULTRA51.LBR — The 'ultimate' war games dialer.

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