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23A

PASCAL NEWS



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PASCAL USERS GROUP (U.K.)

Pascal News 23a is a supplement, to plug the lengthening gap between US originating 23 and 24. Readers will note that its contents are quite different from those of previous editions. There is a shift of emphasis from matters of concern at leading edge University level, to those of concern to producers and users of inexpensive standardised products.

That shift has been wholly dictated by the content of material submitted for publication. Whether it is a temporary side-step or a permanent change, will also be decided by contributors (to future editions). PUG(UK) is the servant of you the subscribers and as such, will publish material originating from any section of the user community.

We are all indebted to each contributor but Tony Heyes's generosity in offering his Bibliography suite of programs for refinement through the medium of PN is particularly appreciated. Constructive critiques are welcome.

There is a widening of the user base and an overdue deployment of resources to that end, evidenced by the complementary nature of articles from widely differing sources. Read on and judge for yourselves. Although you will find that 23a is pitched at quite a different level from that of your usual expectations of PN, I sincerely hope that you will welcome it as a stop-gap until 24 becomes available from Rick, Andy, and Co.

The following is offered as an illustration of the scene which prompted the production of a supplement.

Intrigued by advertising which referred to "mere humans", I went along to the personal computer show at the Barbican on September 12th.

Imagine the disappointment at failing to find anything innovative or even mildly interesting. Discovered that with a single exception, exhibitors did not know whether standard Pascal was implemented on the machines offered to the public. More than one of those asked, replied "Yes, it's called UDCS or something like that". At one stand, sponsored by British Petroleum, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Council for Educational Technology, and others, an 'expert' merely looked blank and suggested that I ask someone else. 'Someone Else' replied "We are only interested in things for use in Education". At the

National Computing Centre stand, another expert, when asked if his stand offered any information about standard Pascal and its implementation or use in a microcomputer environment, replied "No, there is no demand", deftly followed by "Can I help you sir?" to someone standing behind me. In some instances, the initial answer was "Yes", followed by misrepresentative flannel when a demonstration was requested.

Met a guy who holds a powerful position in the largest education authority in Britain. He believes that BASIC is an "appropriate" language for the "mass" of young people who "won't bother" to become seriously interested in the technology. I should admit at this point, that had my first experience of a perception of machine intelligence been through the medium of BASIC (or COBOL, FORTRAN, etc.), I might easily have joined the ranks of those who either "won't bother" or are suitably unimpressed by obscure combinations of hunches, guesses, and a dash of perceptual skill which only occasionally fail.

And now for something different --

1. To those of you who requested supply of back numbers, I regret that I still haven't found a solution to the very high direct and indirect costs of small numbers of reprints. Even when you are willing to cover all costs, there remains the burden of manual labour and time. Any ideas?
2. PLEASE, if you must use purchase orders, include subscription with it. Otherwise there will be a drowning in paperwork.
3. I still haven't resolved the problem of how to service subscribers to PUG(USA). Unfortunately, if they are serviced out of local funds, the EFFECT (whatever the intention) is subsidisation of more prosperous PUG(USA) by barely solvent PUG(UK) and a detrimental effect on local service.

In a similar vein, escalating costs necessitate an increase in the numbers of subscribers, or, an increase in subscription cost for '83. It is suggested that a subscription of 25 Pounds per annum for firms and institutions, with a personal subscription of half that amount, would be equitable.

