

The Pascal Newsletter: An Outsider's Retrospective

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INTRODUCTION

This document attempts to provide a retrospective commentary about the **Pascal Newsletter**. This newsletter was published between January 1974 and November 1983. The newsletter's purpose was described in the first newsletter as follows:

This is the first issue of a newsletter sent to users and other interested parties about the computer programming language Pascal. Its purpose is to keep the Pascal community informed about the efforts of individuals to implement Pascal on different computers and to report extensions made to the language.

The newsletter eventually became the main communication vehicle for the **Pascal User's Group** (PUG), a rather extensive organization which had several thousand members at its zenith (I believe the membership never exceeded 3,000 in one year).

This reviewer sees the Pascal Newsletter as a significant endeavor by a group of computer programming professionals to communicate useful and timely information about a specific programming language in a non-traditional and stimulating fashion. This type of communication would serve as a very useful model for similar communications of other types of technical endeavors.

The newsletter issues described in this retrospective include issue # 1 through 27. Other issues past 27 may exist, but these are unknown to this reviewer.

NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION HISTORY

George Richmond (Computing Center, University of Colorado) started the Pascal Newsletter with issue # 1 in January 1974. He produced three more issues (# 2 to 4) while doing the other thankless chores of distributing two Pascal compilers and promoting Pascal in other ways.

In mid-1975 **John Strait** and **Andy Mickel** (University of Minnesota) proposed a Pascal User's Group (**PUG**) after having talked to several other Pascalers around the U.S. At the Minneapolis ACM '75 conference in October 1975, Strait and Mickel launched the group at an ad hoc meeting (35 members) convened by **Rich Cichelli** and **Bob (Warren) Johnson**. A year later we began the task of producing 4 issues of Pascal Newsletter which PUG as a group assumed responsibility for.

Mickel and Strait edited the first 2 new issues (# 5 and 6) with help from Tim Bonham on the Implementations section. By issue # 8 Strait had less time for the constant demands of the newsletter and only promised occasional help. But with issue # 8 **Jim Miner**, **Sara Graffunder**, and others volunteered to help. With issue # 9-10 (a combined issue) the load was spread quite a bit, which only caused coordination problems.

Combined issue # 9-10 was born with a new name, **Pascal News**. The reason for this change in Mickel's words was "We changed the name to avoid confusion by people who think a newsletter is 4 pages long."

Mickel held the job of editor for issues # 5 to 14. With issues # 15 and 16 Mickel and **Rick Shaw** shared the editor's chair. Shaw took over full editorship with issue # 17 and produced 6 more issues (# 18 to 23).

Nick Hughes in the U.K. produced special issue # 23A as "a supplement to plug the lengthening publication gap between U.S. originating issues 23 and 24."

Issues # 24 to 27 were produced by **Charlie Gaffney**. Gaffney was the publisher of **USUS News**, the newsletter for the UCSD p-System User Society of La Jolla California. Issue # 27 (November 1983) again encountered a name change, **Pascal & Modula-2**, in hopes of attracting programmers with an interest in the programming language Modula-2.

(* Part of this history is from Pascal News combined issue 9-10, page 10 *)

