ABBUC

The LIAUG Lighthouse

The newsletter of the Long Island Atari User Group

LIAUG Man Of The Year

Long Island Atari User Group

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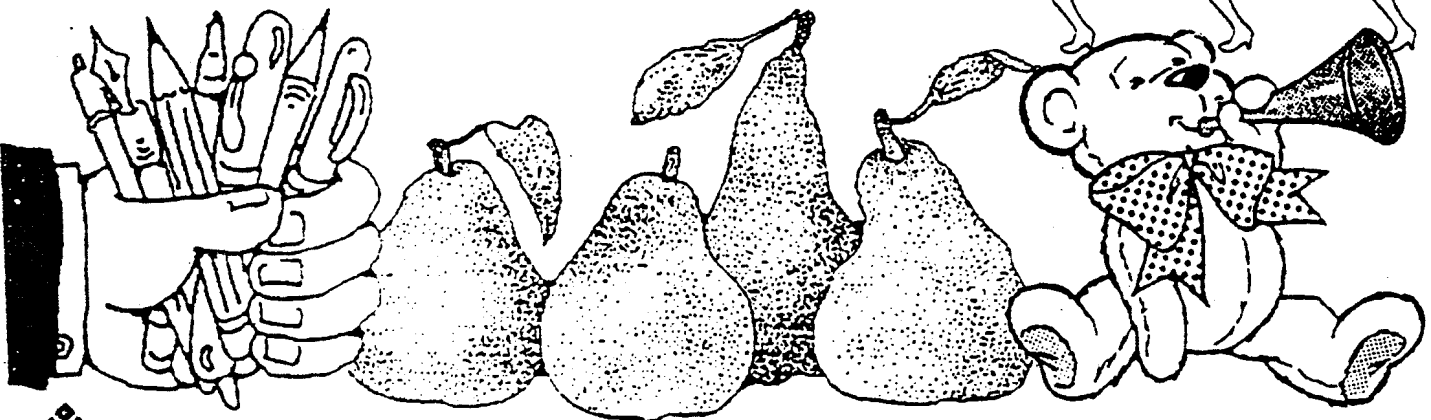
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Full Page.......................................	30.00

Rates are per issue –camera ready copy only Consecutive ads placed at the same time receive a 10% discount per issue with a 30% maximum. Send ads to our regular mailing address

Directions to the library: From the Long Island Expressway: Take exit 58 North (Old Nichols Road). continue north for approximately two miles and make a left (west) turn onto Smithtown Blvd. Continue west for 1 1l2 miles to the Nesconset Plaza on the right hand side of the road. The library is located in the west end of the plaza

From The Northern State Parkway: Take the Northern to the end where it continues east as Veterans Memorial/Nesconset Highway (routes 3471454). Go east approximately two miles and take the left fork (347). Continue for another three miles to Terry Road. Make a right turn onto Terry Road and take the left fork (approximately 3l4 mile) onto Smithtown Blvd. The library will be in the Nesconset Plaza on the left hand side approximately one mile from the fork.   Meetings are open to all those interested at no charge. The meetings begin at 1200 p.m. in the library's community room and end at 400 p.m.

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Club Meetings

The Long Island Atari User Group Meets once a month at the Nesconset branch of the Smithtown Library. Membership dues are $20 per year and entitles you to receive the newsletter.

The newsletter is currently being produced on a 520ST with 1mbyte memory and a 20mbyte hard drive. Software is Timeworks Desktop Publisher.

If you have any questions or comments about The Lighthouse or LIAUG, please write to our mailing address or post on our BBS

Ow address is:

LIAUG
P.O. Box 92   Islip NY 11751

Our BBS number is: (516) 221-8462

If no answer call: (516) 221-2964 and leave a message.

MINI MIDI LESSONS

Continued from December 1989

by Morris G. Miller

#2

WHAT DO I NEED FOR MIDI ?

Coming from a computer user this question relates to "what do I need to add in order to use MIDI?" Selecting your computer is another subject, but there are MIDI connections for almost every computer now made. As a matter of fact. many MIDI instruments can be used without a "computet" and have their own computer functions built into them. Many keyboards can record and play back the songs played on them.

For your computet to send a song to the keyboard you will need a sequencer or player program. There are some simple player programs and a few decent sequencers and editors available in the public domain. Commercially available programs ate much bettet, but you pay for what you get. Another lesson will go into more detail about sequencers and editors. Basically, the sequencer will allow you to record a song as you play it. edit mistakes and make musical performance changes, select the voices, and play the song back to the synthesizer.
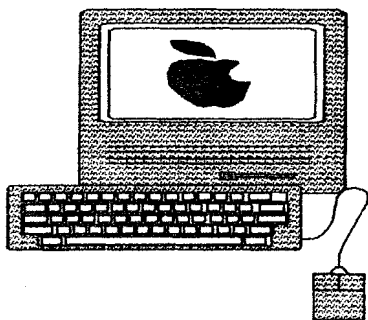
Some computers have plug in card slots. MIDI interface cards are available for MAC, IBM–PC Apple, and others. Synthesizer cards are available for MAC and IBM-PC. If your computer does not have a MIDI interface built in, Apple makes a simple interface to plug into a serial port, but programs to drive it may be a problem.

Synthesizers can be purchased without keyboards. All keyboards have synthesizers in them. It is the keyboard which sends the performance signals to the computer for recording. When played back from the computer it is the synthesizer which makes the voice sounds you hear. You can play any song to a synthesizer whether it has a keyboard or not. Therefore there are two factors involved:

(a) If you know you will seldom be entering notes or ▊ the ⅃ buy a keyboard ki for the best synthesizer. You'll save enough money on the f keyboard to buy another synthesizer itt a keyboard.

(b) Otherwise buy the best keyboard you can, with less regard to the quality of synthesizer it contains. Get

a better synthesizer as a separate item.

You will need an amplifier and speaker system. Any good home music system will be great. Add to it an audio mixer for combining the sound output of two to four separate synthesizers and microphone inputs. Radio Shack has areasonably good one at a modest price. If your music system has a cassette recorder in it then all the bettet. Record your performances and take it with you. You don't have to buy everything at once. When an item is to become permanent to the system, then buy the best you think you can afford.
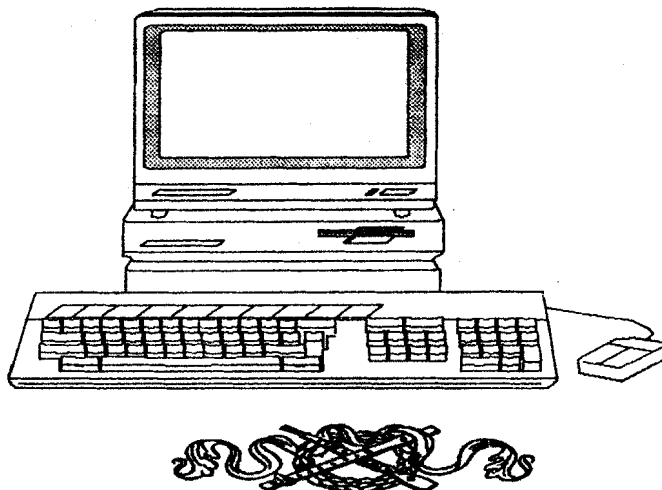
Computers and Education

G.L. Ray (TACE)

I don't get on a soapbox very often. But I encountered something this past week that moved me to write this piece. The subject I want to explore is the connection between computers and the classroom; how many computers ate needed and how they should be utilized.

First of all, let me explain how I use computers in my classroom. I have two 130XE systems of my own which I take to school to use in my classroom. I also have two Panasonic 109 li II printers connected to MPP 1150 interfaces.

I teach 7th- and 8th-grade Art in a medium-sized junior high school. We utilize the computers in several ways.

First of all. as a teacher. I use the computer to record and average grades. Another way I utilize a computer is to maintain a student database. Such information as student phone numbers. addresses. and parents names can come in very handy. I also use my word processor continuously to produce handouts. quizzes, and assignments. I can keep lots of assignments and handouts on one easily found disk. (My file cabinets are not known to be very tidy. On the other hand. my disk library is a model of efficiency.)

If the above were the only reasons for a computer in the classroom. for me it would be enough, but the students utilize the computer also. First of all, students use the computer as a means of creating art. I use Rambrandt, the design studio software from Antic Magazine. as a tool for creating artwork on the computer screen. As an assignment. each student Is to create a drawing on the computer, print it out. and mat it for display. A second assignment is to create a graphic printout with various application programs. such as Printshop. PrintPower, and Awardware.

The most ambitious project for my students has been producing a school newspaper. Students utilized the word processor. Printshop, Crossword Magic, and a WordFind program from Antic magazine in creating their first newspaper.

Now, what value do the students receive from using a computer? Don't real artists paint with brushes not joystcks? Is a computer really necessary to teach art?

Well, yes and no. I could teach art with nothing but a pencil and a sheet of paper. But I choose to also include brushes and paints, pen and ink. screen printing and numerous other materials and tools. The computer is just another tool I utilize in teaching design, creativity, and all of the other aspects involved in an artwork.

My view on the use of the computer in the classroom differs with the traditional viewpoint. The traditional view puts the computer in a computer lab where students learn to program in BASIC. utilize a word processor, and maybe some drill practice on math or history facts. Computers are used to learn about computers or to take the place of flashcards.

1 have two strong arguments against this format. First of all, who gets access to these computer labs? Usually. only the top students. The majority are left out in the cold. Second, how can computers in a lab setting prepare students for real world applications. Computer labs dwell on computer programming/operation and drill practice, not on problem solving and creativity.

I believe that the computer can be utilized in every subject taught. An English teacher can let students type their own poems and short stories. An Economics teacher can assign students to key in the latest figures into a stock market simulation. Science fair projects can be accentuated with graphics, signs. and banners using Printshop I could go on and on. but you get the picture.

In the teal world people don't use computers to learn how to program in BASIC They use computers for spreadsheets and word processing and desktop publishing and telecommunications. Computers are used as a tool to solve problems. And that is exactly how computers should be used in the classroom. Computers should not be removed from the rest of the curriculum, but integrated within it. Teach students how to utilize the computer to get things done...on the job training, so to speak.

How many computers will this take? Several computers will be needed in each classroom, obviously more than most schools wish to spend. But yet, maybe not. Not all teachers are ready, or willing to take this approach. Some teachers that I work with are terrified with the computer. Let's just start with those adventurous souls ready to expand the education process, and put a few in each classroom. always expanding each year as there is need.
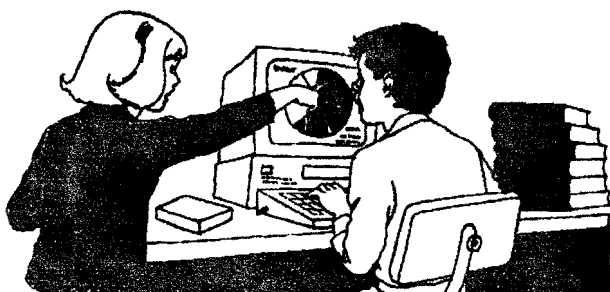
And whoever said that computers have to be IBM or Apple? I could install three to four Atari systems for each IBM or Apple and accomplish every bit as much. You see, it's not the computer system used that is important, it's how the computers are put to use. The principles are the same.

Our school has received a 550,000 computer grant for our library. But we can only buy certain EDUCATIONAL software to run on IBM or APPLE computers. And we can't have more than a certain number of computers unless we put them in a computer lab format. And what does all of this accomplish? It gives teachers something to let students do

when they get finished with their regular assignments.-they can go to the library and PLAY on the computer.

I am sure that other views on computers and education have their good points. but to me. we are missing the boat. Let's integrate computers into all aspects of the curriculum, allowing all students to learn how computers can enrich their lives. Let each classroom have computers as part of their equipment. Teachers can then use the computer in any number of creative ways right there in the classroom. They can even let the kids PLAY on the computers when they get their regular assignments done. and run some of that EDUCATIONAL software. But, just think of the many other things that could be done,

AN OPEN LETTER TO ICD

From Joseph M. Sliker

Dear ICD;

Thank you.

I mean it. I had been a little perturbed with you folks a year or so ago. shortly after buying my XF551 and SpartaDos version 3.2, when I learned that you had apparently backed off of a plan to release a new version of SpartaDos which would have supported the high speed mode of my new drive.

I feel differently now. Today. February 21, 1989, I bought

SpartaDos **X.** In this time of waning support lor my trusty Atari 8-bit computer, when it is so difficult to find anything new, much less impressive for it. you have released a product of incredible quality. It felt good to pick the package off of the shelf. To begin with. thank you for bothering to commission professional graphic design for the packaging. My gosh. SpartaDOS **X** LOOKS respectable1 Perhaps it seems a bit like a gentleman who arrived hours too late. dressed in a tuxedo, for a party that is winding down. but dammit, he cared enough to come. Maybe we'll crank the party up again and order more stuff just to celebrate his arrival.

Thank you also for the manual. This is a VAST improvement over those included with the original disk versions. My biggest complaint with the earlier manual was the lack of an adequate directory or index. The SpartaDOS X manual is great. The front end of the book contains a complete and detailed table of contents and the back is full of well otganized appendices and a useful index. I have not yet read the manual in any detail. but it is a pleasure to flip thtough. The chapter and page layout seems quite appealing and readable.

Although I have not yet read the manual. I popped the sturdy. professional looking "piggyback" cartridge into the back of my 130XE and powered up. Yes. I know there's some new stuff in there that I may come to appreciate and depend upon in the near future (as when I made the transition to SpartaDOS 3.2 in the first place) but the territory here appeared to be familiar enough. and I was able to start working tight away. I'm writing this very letter during one of my initial uses of the cartridge.

Obviously I can't yet write any sort of review of your product. (Really, I'm mostly a user of 8-bit products, I'm not very sophisticated about the technical end of things
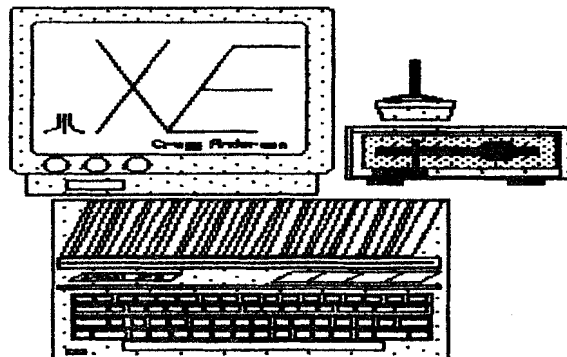
anyway.) I refer other readers to Matthew Ratcliff's article in the March. 1989 issue of Antic and to The review of SpartaDOS X written by Keith Joins in a recent issue of the Jersey Atari Computer Society's Newsletter.

I am satisfied that my money is well spent. I'll probably pass my original SpartaDos Disks on to some up and coming Atarian. I am looking forward to seeing how much further I can go with SpartaDOS X.

To top all of this off, about a week after I returned your product registration card. you sent me a small. but again. very professionally produced catalog of your Atari-related products. 1 know this is going to sound dumb in this age in which it seems impossible to escape constant advertising and sales pitches for all manner of unneeded stuff. but in this case it was a pleasure to be marketed! It's sad to say, but there is only one store in the vicinity of Milwaukee (I said in the vicinity, it takes quite a drive to get there) that has anything resembling a display of Atari 8-bit products. Sure. I've got the backup of an excellent user group and I know how to acquire products and programs via mail order and the Public Domain, but it is still reassuring to have someone attempting to produce and sell excellent quality commercial products to us Atari 8-bitters.

Thanks again.

Joe Sliker

P.S. I bought a used P:R:Connection some time back. It is also serving me just fine. Thanks for that one too.

March 24, 1989

Fellow 8-bitters:

Don't count this as a review of SpartaDOS X, but simply a few comments on a few of the features that I've recently learned about. Now that I've had a chance to play around with SpartaDOS X a little more. I like it even better. Having DOS on a cartridge is great. It's simply fantastic to have my system up and ready to star? working four seconds after power-up.

It's probably true that I never completely understood all of the features of the earlier disk version, but it appears that SpartaDOS X is a much more flexible and efficient system to use. Supposedly SpartaDOS X also more closely resembles the MS-DOS environment than did earlier versions of SpartaDOS. Disks that I formatted with the earlier version are still compatible, which is really nice. Previous SpartaDOS 3.2 users will find that they may keep their old "STAR-TUP.BAT" files on the disks in the event that they may wish to boot without the **X** cartridge installed. However. these will be ignored because SpartaDOS X looks for two files at boot: namely "CONFIG.SYS" and "AUTO-EXEC.BAT" to do the same sorts of chores (albeit much more flexibly). One initially pesky difference between new and old is the addition of the "X.COM" command. Formerly. one had only to tutn "BASIC OFF"prior to running certain programs and then enter the program name at the command line. Now, one needn't bother with that first step, but you must remember to type an "X" firs!. and a blank space before the filename. I've gotten the hang of this one pretty quickly though.

When you do a lot of telecommunications work like J do. you run into the need for programs which will "ARChive" and exttact from archived files. This helps save storage space on the host system and transmissionlconnect time for the user. SpartaDOS X has such a utility built right into the cartridge, so it's always at your fingertips. No more searching

through your disks to find **your** un-arcing program so that you can read the current issue of Z-mag. This utility is so handy and works so quickly that I simply leave many large or infrequently used files in their .ARCed format and extract them into a ramdisk only at the time I need them. This saves a lot of disk storage space, but at the same time allows you to keep certain files handy.

Another nice feature is the FIND command. When you use a Double Sided. Double Density drive like the XF551, you often get into using a subdirectory file storage structure. Despite it's advantages. you sometimes get "lost" or forget where a needed file is. If you can remember even a fragment of the name of such a prodigal file, FIND will do just what the command name implies and it'll tell you the route to use to get to it.

SpartaDOS X already seems to be a pretty dynamic product. I just purchased version 4.19 and already there is a version 4.20 available (don't worry, you needn't shell out for an upgrade chip right away; the changes/improvements are being released for owners via services such as CompuServe, GEnie and ICD's own BBS). For example. AtariWriter Plus initially would not run under SpartaDOS X, but a revised version of the "X" command described above has been released as "XX.COM".

I've barely scratched the surface of SpartaDOS X and I am certainly not the person to attempt a full-scale technical review of it. But as a regular user of the Atari 8-bit computer line. I am pleased. It is the most flexible and powerful DOS I have ever used and it has been quite easy to learn. Although it cost more than any other cartridge or disk based software I've ever purchased for my computer, it was certainly worth the price.
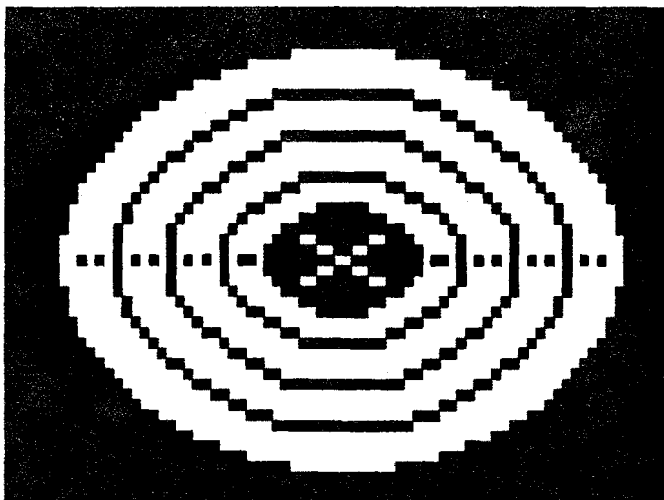
A review of War in Middle Earth for the Atari ST computers

I was given a copy of War in Middle Earth to review by a friend of mine who received versions for all computers to review. even though he only has an Amiga.

War in Middle Earth (WIME) comes on three single sided disks. It is possible to copy all of the files onto a hard drive, or onto double sided disks because the program is not copy protected. If you own a double sided drive, but no hard drive, I suggest copying the contents of disk 2 and 3 onto a double sided disk. This way, you only have to swap disks once. If you do not have a double sided drive or a hard drive, you are in for a lot of disk swapping. It is great that Melbourne House did not copy protect the disks, so users can take advantage of their double sided drives and hard drives.

WIME uses a large map that is included in the game for copy protection. Periodically WIME will ask you for the coordinates of something on the map. At first it may be hard to find some of the cities and landmarks, but after playing for a while, it is no problem locating things on the map. The inconvenience of looking things up on the map is well worth not having copy protected disks.

WIME is based heavily on the Lord of the Rings Trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien. You control the forces of good trying to destroy the ring of power. To do this, you must bring it to Mount Doom. located in the middle of the evil territory. Along the way, you can supposedly gain the support of other armies to help destroy the ring. I found that after a

while they joined me even if I did not try to get their help.

The manual included with WJME has a good overview of the Middle Earth world, so reading the Lord of the Rings trilogy is not necessary. Also. it has a good glossary of people and places. The section on how to play the game does not make the gameplay totally clear. but it is not hard to figure out. The manual also has some good strategies.

Gameplay in WJME takes place at three different levels. At the highest level is a map of all of Middle Earth which shows the location of all good, evil, and neutral forces. At the next level is the Campaign map which gives a nice scrolling map of Middle Earth with the different forces shown as different shields or figures. This level is perfect for war gaming. The screen scrolls when you move the pointer to the edge, so it is very easy to move around Middle Earth. It is from this level that you can give commands to the forces that you have control of. At the most detailed level is the Animation Level. This level shows fully animated pictures of all of the people and monsters against nice digitized backgrounds.

I found some major problems with the game. The main problem was that you can move units through mountains. rivers, and evens partly though lakes. One of the hardest parts of the game is getting into the area around Mount Doom, which is surrounded by mountains with passes guarded by 10.000 orcs, but it is possible to walk through the mountains and avoid the orcs. Maybe this was intentional on the programmers' part, but I find that it makes the game far too easy. I encountered another problem one time I was playing and decided to go straight for Mount Doom. After walking through the mountains to avoid the mountains to avoid the orcs in the passes, I went to Mount Doom. Mount Doom was guarded by about 2,000 orcs, and I didn't stand a

chance, but I went for it anyway. The orcs killed me. but then it gave me the victory sequence, even though I had jus: been killed at Mount Doom. Also, I had some problems getting my units to move exactly where I wanted them to in the shortest path.

Even with these flaws, WIME is an entertaining game. It is more of a war game than an adventure game, but still has ar: adventure feel to it. I only recommend this game to Tolkien fans who think they would like a war game/adventure game cross, but if you prefer Ultima and Dungeon Master type games over war games, you are probably better off waiting for Chaos Strikes Back or Ultima V.

Dan Crevier GENIE - D.CREVIER

UseNet- dcrevier@claremont.edu
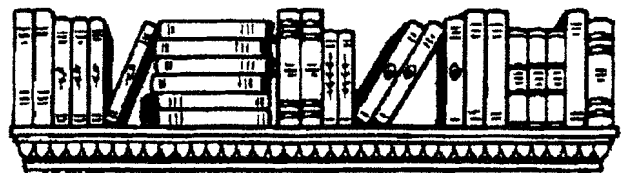
"Computer Viruses: A High-Tech Disease,'

by Ralf Burger, published by Abacus (Grand Rapids, MI). c. 1989, 276pp, 518.95 suggested retail.

This new book about computer viruses is so detailed it includes viral programs you can type in yourself just so you can see how a virus works! The programs, listed in assembly, BASIC. and Pascal are probably the most controversial section of the book, but the author argues that it is people without knowledge who pose a more serious threat to the future of PC security. The more people know about something, the less "mystery" it acquires.

"Computer Viruses" is written on many levels and most parts can basically be understood by anybody with even a limited knowledge of programming and computer literacy.

Surprisingly, the book does make mention of the Atari ST and Amiga, therefore realizing that there are other computers in the universe besides the IBM. (Did you know in Germany

"Technically, the Atari ST handles MIDI timing better than the others. Musically, it has a great feel."

"When I went to purchase a computer, I talked to several of the top studio drummers around Los Angeles who overdub on everybody's computer tracks. I asked them which computer felt the best to them. They all told me the Atari. Whatever the technical reasons, the Atari ST just handles MIDI timing better."

LEE RITENOUR
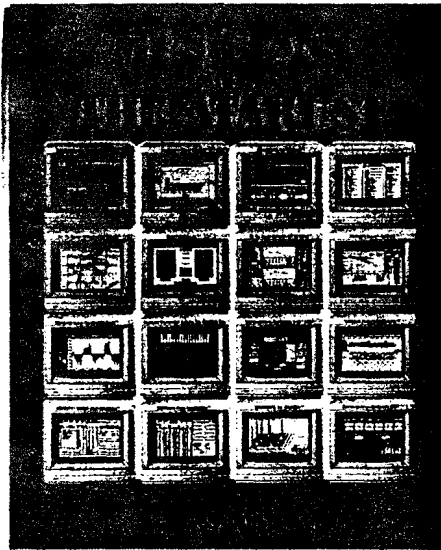
being released for owners via services sucn as CompuServe,

there is a program released called the Virus Construction Set for the Atari ST? You can custom-make your own virus to play havoc with your and other's disks!)

The last few pages make reference to the future and the author talks about the future of viruses when coupled with Artificial Intelligence. All in all. the book is fascinating and comprehensive. Get it.

ANNOUNCING

☆ 8Mt Public Domain Disks

• PD128_____ Utilities #1

Includes "undelete" - restores deleted files: DOSWIZ - Super disk utilities pak which includes a sector editor and more; Compress - compress binary files to use less disk space; 'Content" converts text files between letter perfect format and DOS 2.0 format; "XDISPLAY"- 80 column display for your Atari (includes docs): WAIL-WIZ" - converts Atari maillist files into letter wizard compatible: "LBL1020" - print labels with the syn-series look-alike program: "SYNCOPY" - Copy disk with this Syn-series look-alike. & more,

• PD136_____ Atari DOS 4.0

The DOS that Atari Inc. spent SIOOOOO developing and never released. Code name "QDOS", it supports single, enhanced and double density drives. Single drive systems require minimal disk swapping. 100 screen on-line help (help) system.

• PD38__ Menu Making Programs

A disk packed full of the best menu programs for every type of use. Menus for basic. binary and text. Each with its own unique features. You can customize all your disks with your own unique menu.

Bloodwych

the new 3/d computer RPG on the block.

This game is GREAT. I've finished 22% and have seen more puzzles than in all of DMJ This game has all the good features of DM; (spells, 3/D Graphics, real time play, Enchanted weapons. Magical items, Regen spots. learn by doing,etc...). The things that are not there aren't missed. They are Light (don't have to worry it's all lighted), can't throw things (I'm not into temper tantrums anyway). weight of things isn't a problem. no way to carry things but if you can keep up to 99 coins or arrows in one inventory spot it isn't a problem.

If you consider the things that are in this game that aren't in DM. you will see it stacks up well! These things are: Two players at the same time (can be in different places. can work together,etc..), Communication with characters and monsters (all mouse driven). You can praise. curse, boast, retort and you can question abdut people. places, things etc.. You can buy, sell or trade and you can state your name, profession and ask about his, etc... The parser is quite complex (if you start to bore him he will attack (grin) but it's not bogging down the game as in Ultimas or the c*%py text only games (you don't spend your money on them do you?).

You can leave one of your characters in a spot and move on. then look to see what he sees (comes in handy when the effect of a button isn't in the same area) and he's within hearing range. You can dismiss a character (if you are tired of him) and add a new one. I could go on all night about this game!

So, if you want a good DM. type game with more plot, more puzzles, then me and Bloodwyn, Murlock. Baldrick and Thai will see you in the towers. If not!?

Then get your jollies on them joystick (bored in fifteen minutes) (wasted 40.00 smackers) games (you won't see me there).

R.W.Roy

P.S. for clues call Mirrorsoft (A.T.T. Direct 011-44-1-928-1454)It costs about 85 cents for the first min. Less after that. between 9-1 days our time EDT; that's 2-6 their time (London)

Llaug 1990 Meeting Dates

Jan 6	July 7
Feb 3	Aug 4
Mar 3	Sept 8
Apr 7	Oct 6
May 5	Nov 3
June 2	Dec 1

BEST Builds a Better Mouse

New Mouse Available for ST/Mega and XUXE Computers

By Bill Rayl

I've never been totally satisfied with the design or durability of the ST mouse provided by Atari Corp. On the design side. the ST mouse is a bit too large and oddly shaped for comfortable hours-long usage. As for durability, I've found from my own personal usage that an Atari mouse, if properly cleaned on a regular basis, still ceases functioning properly in less than two years.

I consider myself an average to heavy user of the ST. putting in at least 20-30 hours per week in front of the computer. In the last three years, I have repaired or replaced the Atari mouse three times. Dungeon Master alone did one of the little rodents in!

Because of the almost constant cleaning. repairing and replacing of the mouse. I had a modified trackball added to my ST system. This solved the durability problem, but a trackball isn't the most comfortable thing to work with after a few hours either. Add that to the fact that some operations are just plain easier to perform with a mouse than a trackball, and I was looking for a better alternative. I've used

the MicroSoft(tm) Mouse on the IBM and I found its design and near maintenance–free operation to be far superior to my Atari's mouse. "Now why hasn't someone produced a mouse this good for the ST?" I asked myself.

Well. now someone has! BEST Electronics of San Jose. California has built a mouse that I believe even puts the MicroSoft(tm) mouse to shame.

Retailing for $49.95. the same price as the Atari mouse. the BEST mouse is designed with the user in mind. From its sleek design that fits comfortably into your hand to the replaceable teflon "mouse feet" that make the device glide over your computer desk, the BEST mouse is a joy to use. No more cramped fingers and tired hands after a few hours of Desktop Publishing! The mouse buttons are responsive and quite firm — much better than the Taiwan or Korean produced Atari mice.

The BEST mouse also boasts a high resolution photo tracking of 200 pulses per inch, making this mouse approximately twice as fast and responsive as the Atari mouse. When using the BEST mouse, you don't need a mouse accelerator!

Not to be outdone by the exterior. a look inside the BEST mouse instantly shows this mouse lives up to its name. The rollers that contact the mouseball do not seem to be prone to the dirt build-up you get with the Atari mouse. No more scraping gunk off the rollers each month! Overall. this means better performance with less maintenance. And, if something ever does break down, BEST Electronics carries replacements for every part in the mouse.

If you're an XL/XE owner using a GEM-like operating system such as Diamond OS from ReeveSoft, the BEST mouse offers you a better alternative to purchasing an Atari mouse. For a comparable price, the BEST mouse is truly the better buy!
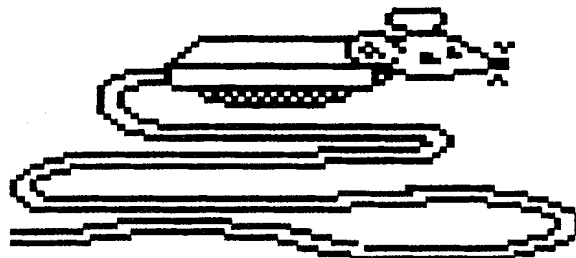
Using the BEST mouse on my spongy, cloth-covered mouse mat yielded less than satisfactory results. When I used the mouse directly on my desktop, or on any hard surface, the BEST mouse performed beautifully. This seems to be because the mouse feet actually lift the mouse slightly from the mat or desk surface, allowing the mouse to skate effortlessly over the desktop. Using a spongy mouse mat, the BEST mouse simply isn't able to glide — sort of like roller skating on a carpet.

If your mouse is on its last legs or you're tired of the constant maintenance and repair of the Atari mouse, take a good look at the BEST mouse. Chances are you'll decide the BEST mouse really is the best mouse available for your ST/Mega or XUXE. For more information. see your local Atari dealer or contact BEST Electronics, 2021 The Alameda, Suite 290, San Jose, CA 95726 or

(408) 243-6950.

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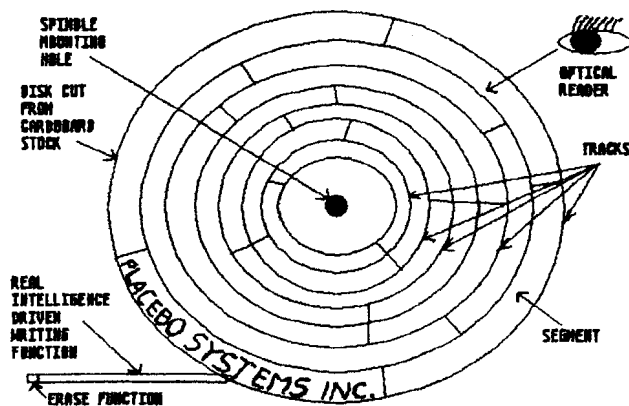
MULTISYNCH MONITORS

COLOR AND HIGH RESOLUTION MONOCHROME DISPLAY FOR THE ATARI STs

COLOR BETTERS THE ST'S SC 1224

Most multisynch monitors, but not all. will work with the ST's RGB output and vertical refresh rate. Advantages are operation in high resolution monochrome and both low and medium color using a single monitor. An additional advantage is the better color rendition with more differentiation in tonalities. Subtle shades are better represented than on the ST. With Sony color monitors, the colors are Kodachrome in quality -- rich and saturated. On the negative side, none of these color monitors will match the sharpness of the Atari SM 124 monochrome monitor.

This monitor, as with other monochromes, uses single pells or pixels to represent screen images. Color monitors must use three (Red, Green. and Blue) to form the same point on a screen. As a consequence, they cannot give the crispness and detail.

THE CRITICAL TEST — MONOCHROME SHARPNESS

If you use monochrome most of the time, as many do with Spectre Macintosh emulation, the major question is whether or not a softer and coarser monochrome display on a color monitor is acceptable for continuous use. It doesn't make sense or cents to buy one of the lower priced multisynch monitors as an economy measure just to obviate the need for two monitors where high resolution monochrome is important. And the purchase of a higher quality and higher priced monitor in the 5600 to 5650 range — such as the Sony 1304 HG or NEC 3D may not make much economical sense either. However there are those who continue to have the desire for these types of monitors — unfortunately. I am one.

MONITOR SWITCH BOX — ROLL YOUR OWN

The following pages give pinouts and wiring diagrams for construction of a Monitor Switch Box so that a multisynch can be used in both color and monochrome with the ST's monitor output. The box is needed to ground the Mono-

chrome Detect line from the ST and force it to boot in high resolution monochrome. It also switches from the ST's RGB color output to Monochrome Intensity output to drive the monitor. The pinouts for all three Sony monitors (1302, 1303. and 1304) are the same. NEC monitors such as the Multisynch and Multisynch II use the same pinouts. Where Sony and earlier NECs use DB-9 inputs, the new NEC 3D uses a DB-15 connector. The NEC pinouts shown are still valid for the 3D. A converter cable — DB-9 to DB-15 supplied by NEC — will give the proper interface. This converter is also available commercially as a one piece plug unit.

Other monitors. such as the Mitsubishi Diamondscan, use different plugs. The Mitsubishi uses a DB–25 which is the same in pins and shell as an RS-232. The ST's output can be routed to these monitors with the proper pinouts and plug.

The Monitor Switch Box can be wired for any monitor output configuration. F another monitor is used. a simple conversion plug is commercially available to reconfigure outputs if both monitors use DB-9 plugs. If plugs are different for two monitors, then wire a cable with the two different terminations. The least effort and highest cost approach is to buy a cable with one of the plugs already made up. If you are good with a soldering iron. then buy the connectors and makeup your own cables.

The ST 13-pin DIN plug is not that easy to work with. The solder or rear side has pins just like the front. and soldering wires to these contacts is not a snap. ST monitor cables. with a DIN 13 male on one end and unterminated on the other. are available from two or three sources. Try Best Electronics or Practical Solutions. A 4-pole. double throw switch (On–On) will be required for the Box. Also fit the Box with an RCA jack if you want sound routed to a stereo or self amplified speaker like those available from Radio Shack. If
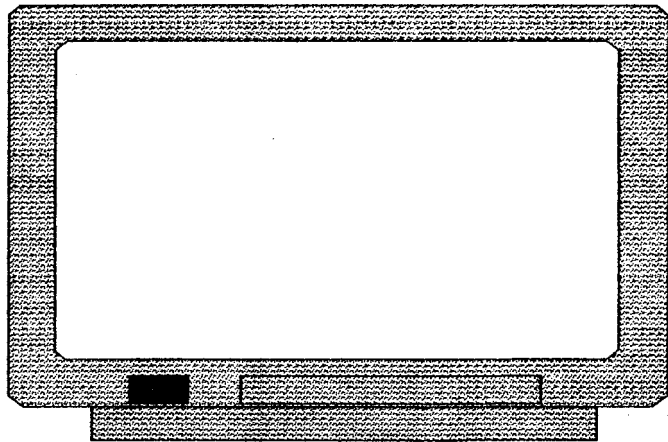
you have Tweety Board, this will not be needed.

MARKET FAILURE OF SWITCH BOXES

There have been several attempts to market these monitor switch boxes. and all but the most recent have not met with success. The first reason is high price. The first box produced was overpriced in the $200 range. The second reason is differences in pinouts and plug configurations for the variety of monitor inputs. There is no standard. The third reason for lack of success is the small ST market for alternative multisynch monitors.

To be continued.

Prism Magazine for the 8bit Atari

by Bob Retelle

This month AIM has something special for its 8bit readers — the first edition of Prism Magazine, a disk based magazine with games to play. articles to read. a useful utility program and some educational programs.

Like most things in life though. there's a catch. This isn't a NEW enterprise. or one that's likely to be continued. This first (and most likely, last) issue of Prism Magazine was created in 1982 but never released. Now. through your User Group and Atari Interface Magazine, you can own a real "collector's item!"

Back in 1982. there were a couple of "Disk Magazines" available for the 8bit Atari. but John Wilson and I weren't very satisfied with the ones we saw. John and I had been writing games and programs for the Atari. and before that. Ohio Scientific computers, both for my company. Pretzelland Software, and John's Unicorn Software. We decided that we could do better than the existing disk magazines. so we formed Magnetic Publications and eventually came up with the name "Prism Magazine." (I think it had something to do with the colorful nature of the Atari...boy, it HAS been a long time!)

We planned an six issues a year, with each disk as full as we could make it (the editorial on the disk proclaims our unofficial goal of an "ERROR 162" for every issue). We had hoped to attract other programmers and writers, but we figured we could fill at least the first year's disks ourselves if necessary. Besides programs and articles, we also wanted to include useful subroutines and character sets that our readers could use in their own programs (which they would hopefully then submit to us for publication!).

John had been working with the Voice Box synthesizer from the Alien Group company and was interested in including speech in many of our programs. We'd considered adding Voice Box dictionary files containing phonetic translations we'd worked out for the programs, as well as those submitted by our readers.

Since then, John has worked out a VBI routine for the Cheap Talker speech program that allows a program to speak without having everything screech to a halt (you may be seeing this application in a future issue of AIM).

Since both of us had young children, we wanted to include educational programs, and since we were both active game-players, we were going to start a 'National High Score Hall of Fame" to be included in each issue. Also, the programming techniques used in the games on the disks were going to be the subject of a series of tutorial articles.

After much planning, we got our programs together and I wrote the "shell" program that handles loading and displaying the text articles. and also loads and runs the games. The first issue was assembled, the DOS was played around with (we expected that the disk would be pirated, but we hoped that the entire disk would be copied and kept together), and the write-protect tab was stuck on the very first Master Disk.

Unfortunately. the timing of our project was all wrong. The Atari market was starting to die out (the first time), and it didn't seem like a good time to try introducing something new. The disks went back into their holders, where they've remained until now.

Recently though, John and I were talking about the "good old days," when you could control an entire character set with just one POKE. and the only "memory management" you had to do was worrying about running out at 48K! (For an idea of just how old this disk is. check out the line at the end of the Editorial that says "Atari is a trademark of Warner Communications!") John suggested that it would be better to just give the Prism Magazine disk to the User Groups, rather than have it go to waste.

Since AIM doesn't have a disk edition yet. what we're going to do is to make the disk available to the User Groups, and to upload a Diskcommed version to CompuServe and club BBSes. The individual files are still copyrighted by John Wilson and myself, and the entire disk is copyrighted by Magnetic Publications. but it may be freely distributed. as long as it is unmodified.

If you'd like a copy of the Prism Magazine disk. but you don't have access to any of the club libraries or BBSes, you can send $3 for shipping and handling to AIM, at the address on the back cover of the magazine.

The contents of the disk are an Editorial. introducing the magazine and some of the ideas behind it, then a short "In This Issue" file introducing the articles and programs.

Then there's an educationa program written by John Wilson to introduce very young children to the concept of naming colors. The program uses the Alien Group Voice Box to speak directly to the child, and to give supportive encouragement. The instructions on the disk give details on how to customize the program to include your child's name. This program can ONLY be used if you have a Voice Box connected to your computetl

Next is a Utility program that John wrote to aid programmers who want to include machine code subroutines in their BASIC programs. It will convert a binary file into DATA statements which can be ENTERed into a program.

The first of our games is one I wrote called "Air and Sea Patrol." inspired by an old 2600 game cartridge. (I used to waste countless hours standing in Sears playing that game on the demo units!) It uses the seldom encountered Wide-Playfield option, and has Display List Interrupt and
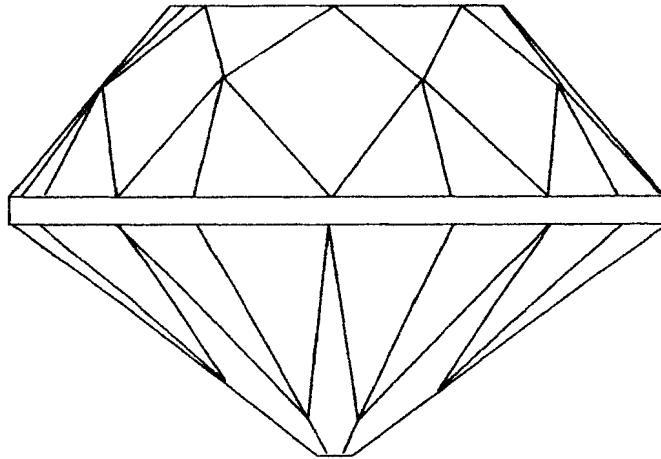
Vertical Blank Interrupt machine code for color, sound and character set animation. You have to blast planes and submarines with your destroyer. while avoiding their bombs and torpedoes. Anyone who's ever used an Ohio Scientific computer will probably recognize the character set in this gamel

The next game is "Kamikaze Saucers," which John wrote. and which uses Vertical Blank to move players and strings to move the graphics. It's a horizontal scrolling. rotating gun turret. in which you have to defend against the alien saucers that are crashing into your station.

"The Playground Maze" is an educational "arcade" game that I wrote for preschoolers. Many times smaller children are attracted to computer games. but find most of them too fast or challenging for their motor skills. This game is completely nonviolent. and can be played at the child's own pace. It introduces problem solving and gives practice in counting and the alphabet. There's a little man who's lost on the playground and the child has to lead him back to his house. through all the obstacles that are scattered around.

The fourth game is a logic puzzle from John, called "The Rings of Atari." It's modelled after one of those simple looking. but devilishly difficult chinese wire puzzles. All you have to do is turn off all the lights, ah, but there's a slight catch,

Finally. there's an article giving tips on how to win at "Wayout." one of my favorite 8bit games, from Sirius Software. We'd planned on running a series of these "Playing Tips" articles for popular Atari games.

If you like what you see on the Prism Magazine disk, let us know through AIM. and we'll see what else we can dig up and dust off. John has several other games that he's finished, or are near completion, and I have a few things that I just KNOW are around here somewhere. If there's enough interest. we can either run the programs and articles here in AIM. or maybe even put together some more "issues" of Prism Magazine!

MegaTouch

a Review by Dan Steffen, MV ACE

I have to say I was not convinced that adding springs to the keyboard would make the keyboard any better or even more like the Mega's, but I am glad to say that I was wrong. The keyboard does not really feel like the Mega's but it improves the overall feel of the keys.

The installation went quite smoothly but it would have gone better if I had read the instructions. The instructions were written on the inside of the cardboard top (the piece that goes on the top of the plastic [bag]) so I didn't see them until it was too late and I had already removed all the keys. To remove the keys. the instructions said to use a small screwdriver or butter knife. However. I though that both these would hurt my keys so I used a paper clip bent in a "U" shape and carefully removed the keys. but trying to keep a constant pressure on all sides of the key.

The problem I had was that I had removed the Right Shift. Space bar and the Return key. This is something that should never be done. Those three keys all have a metal brace that holds them to the keyboard and are a real pain to get back on once the keys have been removed

The whole installation should only take about 15 minutes to 30 minutes (or if you do it like I did, about half an hour to an hour.) You should be able to remove the keys and install the springs without removing the keyboard from the computer case.

When you are removing the keys from the keyboard make sure that you keep a constant pressure on both sides of the key to avoid damaging the keyboard (this is real important.)

One more thing- the instructions tell you to install the springs with the narrow end pointing down. I found after

playing around a bit that if you install them the other way (narrow end pointing up) they seem to fit up inside the keys better.

I really can't believe the difference that these little springs make. I know one thing for sure: if you have a 1040 or 520 (or even a 130 XE) you should own a set of these springs. They make typing on your computer a lot better.

Megatouch Keyboard Stiffeners are produced by Regent Software. P.O. Box 14628. Long Beach. CA 90803. They sell for $11.95 a set retail. however. I've seen them for around $9.00 discounted.

–Dan Steffen,

Miami Valley Atari Computer Enthusiasts

P.O. Box 24221

Huber Heights. OH 45424

Minutes of the 10/7/89 meeting of the Long Island Atari User Group

by Joy Sanderson

The meeting was opened by John Aalto with a report on what was happening. or not happening. with the regional meeting concept, and that there was a possibility of a weekend meeting of officers of the various groups on November 10. 1989.

A discussion followed on the ideal of a calendar newsletter and it was agreed that the Regional Group should try to publish one.

John informed us of the appointment of Bob Brody, the Group Liaison Officer at Atari. Doubt was expressed as to whether this would be of any benefit to user groups or Atari users generally.

Pat Mulvey reported on the BBS which is once more in the process of changing.

Various people showed 8-bit magazines. and a discussion ensued about how much support they were getting from advertisers and software producers. Consensus was that possibly Regional Group user groups might perhaps improve the situation by pressure and . possibly. their own software development.

Randy Constan reported on the treasury. which is still solvent. with about thirty paid-up members.

Jim Harris reported on the 8-bit library regarding the new disks Gus was acquiring. He also informed the meeting that high density disks won't work on 810 drives. So if members require disks for 810 drives. they should inform the librarian at the time of ordering. Harvey Schoen reported on the 16-bit library.

Randy Constan also reported on his new software. an AT ASCII converter.

A slate of officers was proposed as follows:

President ....John Aalto

Treasurer ....Randy Constan

Secretary ....Joy Sanderson

8-bit Librarian ....Jim Harris

8-bit Manager.............................. Pat Mulvey

16-bit Librarian ....Harvey Schoen

16-bit Manager.......................... Terry Madden

The meeting was adjourned at 2:07 PM and was followed by demos.

Closing by the editor

It seems that we have survived another year of Atari. Can anyone doubt that we will continue as long as our machines do what we ask of them? It is great to be able to have the best enjoyment with good systems and good friends to help and share the good times and the not so good.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy Atari New Year.

LONG ISLAND ATARI
USER GROUP

The Long Island ATARI Users Group

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To apply for LIAUG membership fill out the following application and bring It to the next meeting, or mail it (including check or money order) to:

The Long Island ATARI User Group
P.O. Box 92
Islip, New York 11751

The current dues, which includes a subscription to our newsletter, is $20 per year. Kindly make your check payable to The Long Island Atari User Group.

First name: _____ Last name: _____

Address _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Your system. (please be specific):

Computer: 400 600 800 800XL 66 130 620 1040 MEGA

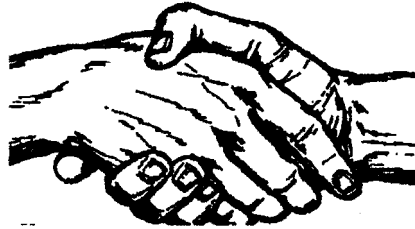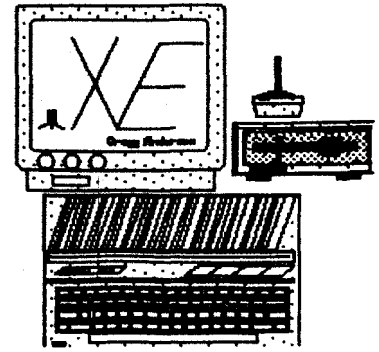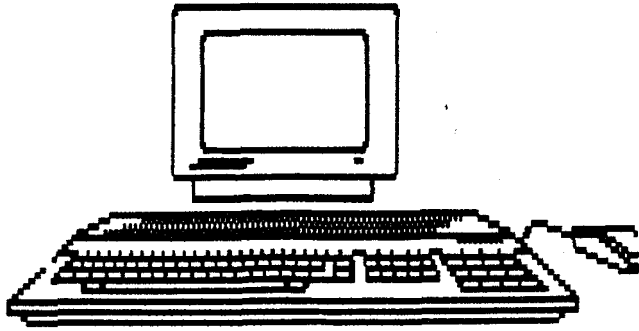Memory: _____ K Cassette: _____ Disk drives _____

Modem: _____ Interface: _____ Printer: _____

Other _____

What languages are you familiar with? _____

_____

in what areas would you like to learn more about your computer system? _____

_____

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It's the beginning of a new decade and a chance to meet new people and learn new skills. Join us at one of the meetings of The Long Island Computer Group. Our next meeting is February 3, 1990.

◇◇◇

The LIAUG Lighthouse
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