

Freedom At Last...

Among "desktop publishers" the past year is likely to be remembered as the year that PostScript finally caught on. While scalable fonts and special font and graphic effects have always been inviting, the cost and printing speed of PostScript has not. Times have, if only incrementally, changed.

1988 has seen widespread industry support of both PostScript printers *and* the Encapsulated PostScript file format. Many new graphics and illustration programs are appearing which will export and/or import EPS files, often with a Windows Metafile or TIFF image that will display on the screen. *Ventura 2.0* (in all its various incarnations) does very well with EPS files, displaying the Metafile or TIFF image if it is included, and even printing the included images (usually at lowered resolution) if you don't happen to have a PostScript printer.

Adobe PostScript is still as expensive and their interpreters as slow as ever, but companies like RIPS of Boulder, Colorado have produced RISC based PostScript boards for the HP LaserJet that make it THE PostScript Printer of choice. The RIPS board, to be reviewed in a later editorial, is so blindingly fast with PostScript that it is almost surreal. New technology is making objections to the printing speed of PostScript obsolete, and bringing some welcome innovations in the process. As for cost, the latter half of 1988 brought the first wave of third-party PostScript interpreters, all at very reasonable prices. While it is the industry's trend to call these products "PostScript Clones", if PostScript is a public domain page description language as Adobe repeatedly insists, then these are not clones, but the "real" thing. It's interesting to note that Adobe does not adhere to the "public domain" version of PostScript, but uses a highly protected and individualized version of the language in their products. Two questions immediately come to mind: When we speak of "PostScript Clones", are we referring to clones of Adobe's proprietary version of PostScript? And, if so, how do you establish an industry standard that is based on a closely-held secret?

It has taken me a long time to come around to this observation, dragged kicking and screaming and resisting all the way: If you are serious about desktop publishing, you need PostScript. Period. The question then becomes when, how and at what price?

Having tested several of the newly introduced interpreters over the last few months, there is one that is so consistently superior to the others that I find it easy to recommend: *Freedom of Press*, by Custom Applications, Inc., is a brilliant performer.

With the amount of horsepower available in today's machines, it makes a certain amount of sense to harness some of that power to speed the interpretation of PostScript output. For a moderate investment (\$495.00 list price), *Freedom of Press* not only allows you to print beautiful pages on your HP LaserJet, but many dot matrix printers are supported as well, as is the HP DeskJet and PaintJet. For an investment of less than \$2000 it is possible to produce color PostScript prints. *Freedom of Press* includes 35 *Compugraphic* PostScript font outlines, all of which are width-compatible with the equivalent Adobe fonts.

All this does come at the cost of some moderately stringent system requirements: An AT, 386 or upper end PS/2 with a 1.2M or 1.44M drive, .5-8M of LIM 3.2 or 4.0 EXPANDED memory (EMS), 640K of RAM (*Freedom of Press* requires 535K for itself), about 4M of available hard disk to house the program, and a supported printer. A math coprocessor will speed up the processing of graphic-intensive pages, but is not required. Although I would generally say that these equipment requirements are still "upper end", they are rapidly becoming the mid-range norm for people involved in either CAD or DTP.

To print PostScript files on a non-PostScript printer, it is necessary to configure whatever application is being used to print to file as if it were a PostScript printer. I have used *Freedom of Press* with consistent and extremely high quality results from the following applications: *Ventura Publisher (2.0 & Professional Extension)*, *WordPerfect 5.0*, *PageMaker 3.0*, *Designer 1.3*, *Micrografx Graph*, *Gem Artline*, *Gem Draw* and many, many others. I have yet to throw anything at it that it could not handle. *Freedom of Press* can be driven by batch files or by typing the commands in on the command line. If there are multiple documents to print, the batch file method might be preferred, allowing printing to take place either over lunch time or overnight. Although printing is fairly slow, especially with graphic images, it is

not unduly so in comparison with conventional PostScript printers. Much of the printing speed is dependent upon the hardware being used.

I am much impressed with the quality of the output. Fonts are clean and crisp, often moreso than the output from an equivalent Adobe font printed on a "real" PostScript printer. Graphics are also clean, with EPS files from programs such as *Corel Headline* printing very well. To give some indication of how compatible *Freedom of Press* is with the defacto PostScript standard, the *Ventura* *capabili.chp* prints exactly as it would on a Adobe licensed PostScript printer (perhaps better!).

Since it does not directly interface between your application and printer, it is necessary to exit the application to print. This essentially eliminates the use of *Freedom of Press* where large amounts of production are required, and makes it awkward to check the multiple minor changes involved in getting it "just right"; I would not want to produce a book using *Freedom of Press*. It is superb, however, for the individual working on a project where no deadlines are pressing, and for the user who only occasionally needs what PostScript has to offer. Most importantly of all, it makes the incredible versatility of PostScript affordable to a large number of users with a wide range of equipment. This, more than anything else, is what will establish PostScript as a true industry standard.

For information on *Freedom of Press*, contact Custom Applications, Inc., 5 Middlesex Technology Center, 900 Middlesex Turnpike, Billerica, MA 01821, at either (800) 873-4367 or (508) 667-8585, and tell them you saw the review in the *NPE*. Also, look for more interesting products coming from *CAI* in the near future...