Issue 9 - April, 1994

Timothy Campbell wraps up his 3-part article on becoming a shareware author with style. Part 3 takes a look at the many distribution methods available to authors. And this month's Author Spotlight focuses Dave Riley of NeoSoft, who has several successful desktop publishing programs to his credit. And don't miss our looks at WinFlash and House Mouse, two excellent new Windows programs that receive high praise from reviewers.

For Information on how to download programs from ZiffNet, click here: What is ZiffNet?

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Author Spotlight: Dave Riley

Column: Timothy Campbell

ZiffNet Monthly Shareware Review

ZiffNet Monthly Shareware Review

The Newest Additions to Our Libraries

Below are listings of some of the newest files available for downloading on ZiffNet for CompuServe. ZiffNet for PRODIGY members can always find up-to-date lists of Newest Titles right on the service by selecting "Newest Titles" from the ZiffNet Software menu.

Downloading from ZiffNet

ZiffNet Originals

PERUSE (PERUSE.ZIP)
PCMAG Utilities/Tips Forum, Library 2 (PCMAG Utilities)
Capture and save text as it scrolls off the top of the screen.

THINDISK v1.1 (THINDI.ZIP)
PCMAG Utilities/Tips Forum, Library 2 (PCMAG Utilities)
Windows utility for trimming the fat from your hard drive.

Applications

AD HOC (ADHOC.ZIP)
PBS Applications, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Interactively design databases in Windows

OBJECT NOTES v3.11 (ONOTE3.ZIP)
PBS Applications, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Comprehensive messaging system for Windows for Workgroups 3.1+.

MILLIE EXPENSE WRITER (MILLIE.ZIP)
PBS Applications, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Expense report generator for Windows.

Games & Entertainment

RAPTOR v1.0 (RAPTOR.ZIP)
PBS Arcade, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Graphically intense shoot-em-up from Apogee

KING ARTHUR'S KORT v1.0 (KORT.ZIP)

PBS Arcade, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Medieval strategy game from MVP Software

SPIDER RUN v1.0 (SPIDER.ZIP)
PBS Arcade, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Race against the clock to keep your spider on its web

LOADER LARRY (LLARRY.ZIP)
PBS Arcade, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Help Larry climb the corporate ladder in this action arcade game.

Utilities

WINPTR (WINPTR.ZIP)
PBS Utilities, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Take control of your printing under Windows with this simple and powerful utility.

WHEN (WHEN.ZIP)
PBS Utilities, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Change a file's date and time with drag and drop capability in Windows.

SNOOPER v3.3 (SNOOPR.ZIP)
PBS Utilities, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Comprehensive system information utility.

How To Download from ZiffNet

If you are a ZiffNet member on CompuServe or PRODIGY, you can easily download all of the programs mentioned in this publication. If you are not already a ZiffNet subscriber, you can find out how to join by selecting "Becoming a ZiffNet Subscriber" below:

Becoming a ZiffNet Subscriber

ZiffNet/CompuServe

All of the programs mentioned in the ZiffNet Monthly Shareware Review are available directly from our Software Library (GO ZNT:SOFTLIB) or in one of the Public Brand Software Forums, PBS Arcade (GO PBSARC) and PBS Applications (GO PBSAPP). The correct forum is indicated in each program highlight, along with the specific library in which it can be found.

ZiffNet/PRODIGY

All of the programs can also be found on the ZiffNet for PRODIGY service. Simply [JUMP]: **ZiffNet** and select "Software" from the menu. Then perform a Search by Title for the program you are interested in.

Become a ZiffNet Subscriber

Anyone with a modem and communications software can discover for themselves everything ZiffNet offers. It is easy! CompuServe members can simply type GO ZIFFNET. If you are not currently a CompuServe member, just follow these easy steps:

1. Set your communications software to seven data bits, even parity, one stop bit. Select a data transfer rate (bits per second) of 1200, 2400 or 9600 baud. Have your modem call the local ZiffNet number. (To find your local ZiffNet number: By modem, dial 800-346-3247 and at the User ID prompt type PHONES; By voice, dial 800-635-6225.)

2. Respond to the prompts by entering the information below:

When you connect: Press **CTRL+C**
Host Name: **CIS**
User ID: **177000,5555**
Password: **ZIFF*NET**
Agreement Number: **SREVIEW**

3. Register your name and credit card number for billing.

You will receive your permanent User ID and temporary Password online. Write them down and use them to log on. You will receive your permanent Password within 10 days, as confirmation of your new ZiffNet membership.

STAX Tops the Pile

There are a lot of Tetris clones out there, but STAX adds an ingenious twist that makes the game more challenging and fun to play. It debuts atop the Arcade list this month, displacing DOOM as the top download for March.

Rank	Prev.	Program	Filename/Location
1	1	**PKZip** Compression Tool	PK204G.EXE PBS Applications, Library 17
2	2	**WinZip** Windows ZIP front end	WINZIP.ZIP PBS Utilities, Library 1
3	-	**Thumbs Up!** Image cataloging program for Windows	THUMBS.ZIP PBS Studio, Library 1
4	5	**ViruScan** Find viruses on your system	SCAN.ZIP PBS Utilities, Library 3
5	3	**PixFolio** Image viewer and manager for Windows	PIXFOL.ZIP PBS Applications, Library 4
6	4	**Computer System Manager** Comprehensive system tracking	CSM.ZIP PBS Professional, Library 1
7	7	**Drag & Zip** Drag & Drop Zipping	DRAGZP.ZIP PBS Utilities, Library 4
8	-	**WizUnZip** Windows ZIP front end.	WIZNZP.ZIP PBS Utilities, Library 4
9	-	**TopSoft Panel** Desktop Info. Panel for Windows	TSPANL.ZIP PBS Utilities, Library 4
10	6	**FontShow** Font management for Windows	FNTSHW.ZIP PBS Applications, Library 4

Rank	Prev	Program	Filename/Location
1	-	**STAX** A Tetris clone - with a twist!	STAX.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1
2	1	**DOOM** 3-D Milestone action game	DOOM.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1
3	2	**Blake Stone: Aliens of Gold** New 3-D Action game from Apogee	BLAKE.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 3
4	-	**King Arthur's KORT** Medieval strategy game.	KORT.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1
5	8	**3Point** Basketball 3-point shooting tournament	3POINT.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1
6	-	**MedWar** Medieval wargame for Windows	MEDWAR.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1
7	4	**ScubaMan's Quest** Underwater adventure game	SCUBA1.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1
8	10	**Pickle Wars** Stop the invading pickles	PICKLE.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 3
9	-	**Xargon** Adventure in a strange magic land.	XARGON.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 3
10	3	**Laser Light** Race the clock light & mirrors game	LSRLT1.ZIP PBS Arcade, Library 1

About the ZiffNet Top 10 Lists

The ZiffNet Top 10s are compiled monthly and are calculated using download statistics from both ZiffNet and ZiffNet for PRODIGY. You can download the top 10 files each month by searching for them individually or by browsing the Top 10 Special Collection found on both services.

April has become synonymous with taxes, keeping everyone's minds on a financial bent. If you're looking for ways that you can plan a little better for next year, take a look at our reviews of Money Smith and House Mouse. And don't miss Marica Meier's review of WinFlash, an excellent educational program for Windows.

<u>About the Ratings</u>

WinFlash
Educational Flash Cards for Windows

Money Smith
Keep track of your Household finances

You're Hired
Get in shape for your job interview

ViruScan
McAfee's industry standard virus detection system

Drag and File
Replace the Windows File Mangler with this handy File management shell

QuikMenu
A graphical DOS Menu system

House Mouse
Stay on top of your household loans

WinFlash
Reviewed by Marcia Meier

    WinFlash is a tool used to memorize text with graphics and/or audio support. You can use it to learn school material or bone up for a trivia game or even create your own game.

    Imagine adding a .BMP graphic or a .WAV sound as one of the component parts to your flashcards. Then imagine easy, and you have the makings of this program.

    Pairs (match the word in column A to the word in column B) can be created using any Windows font and color. You can, for example, use the national alphabets for foreign language studies. A question and answer file, can be created from within WinFlash using the NotePad editor and both can be easily modified.

    Statistics are maintained on current question and answer files and a text question or answer can be displayed concurrently with the playing of an audio question and answer.

    Your questions look the way you like. The program supports hard carriage returns and centering. Questions and answers can be copied to the clipboard. You can create up to 300 question and answer pairs. A database structure stores information on each question answer -- date of last promotional events in Ask Priority Questions (some questions can be determined to be more important than others), number of correct/incorrect responses during the day, number of correct/incorrect responses since the creation of a particular pair, number of days a number of correct responses are needed to promote a short term learning cycle to long term, and the current status of a question answer pair.

    When a question is displayed you can elect to answer it, have the question shown again, disable the question or add the question to a priority list (or how important is the question to learn).

    This program is wonderfully intuitive and highly recommended for anyone in school or learning a new field -- real estate, insurance, investments.

    Questions can be asked in numerical order, in equal allotments, random sequence. You can liven up a learning session by working against the clock. A user can have up to 60 seconds to get the answer. If he doesn't, it is displayed.

    For the serious student this is an invaluable study tool. For the serious minded game player this is a great product to create trivia questions!

More Info.: WinFlash

Main Reviews Page

Money Smith
Reviewed by Russ Lockwood

If your family finances are running in the red instead of rolling in the green, you may want to examine a home-finance program such as Money Smith. Even if your home finances are as good as gold, you still might wish to take a peek at this Windows-based program. You see, it helps answer the two most important questions you have about your finances: Where's the money coming from? And where's the money going?

You don't need to be a CPA in accounting or carry a PhD in economics to use a finance program. But what you must possess is a determination to enter your financial transactions -- ALL your financial transactions -- into the program on a regular basis. If you can't track your income or expenses, then any effort to analyze your finances is doomed to failure. It's garbage in/garbage out and without a commitment to recordkeeping, you might as well pass on this or any other home finance program. If you are serious about the recordkeeping and entering of data, then Money Smith will reward your diligence with a complete breakdown of all your assets and liabilities -- and show which area is growing.

You can think of Money Smith as a finances-specific spreadsheet. The program includes a trio of worksheets to get you started: home, business and renter. Each provides several categories of income and expenses pertaining to the worksheets. For example, business contains a line for accounts payable, something you won't find in the home worksheet. As you go down the list and enter the appropriate amounts for mortgage, cable TV bills, vacation spending, dividends and so on, the program automatically tallies up your income (in black) and expenses (in red) to give you a precise picture of your budget.

You may edit, add or delete categories, set up recurring transactions (like monthly mortgage or car payments), and change the specific period of time you are examining. As you enter the data, you may change the view of your budget, or zero in on specific aspects, such as investments. Worksheets are linked via the menus, and you may import data from spreadsheets if you wish. The graphing functions are capable, offering pie and bar graphs of current and historical financial information. The ability to switch between dollars and percentage figures is a plus.

Money Smith marks the process with a slick interface design. A row of icons across the top of the screen provides instant access to functions, and clever use of the second mouse button offers pop-up menus while highlighting specific categories. Traditional pull-down menus and pop-up dialog boxes speed data entry and analysis. There's even a calculator available.

Should you stumble, and given the depth of the program you probably will have some questions, context sensitive help is available. Dragging the question mark icon and dropping it on the confusing portion of the worksheet is a quick and easy way to find the needed help. That's just another measure of the well-thought out interface design.

Note that Money Smith 3.0 offers a number of new features from version 2.0, including split transactions, transaction import from a spreadsheet and automatic backup. If you're concerned about the coming and going of your cash, Money Smith may be just the program you need to analyze your finances. Its friendly interface, depth of features and flexibility won't make any decisions for you, but it will give you enough views to help you make a budgetary decision. You still may or may not be up the financial creek, but at least you will certainly have a paddle.

More Info.: Money Smith

You're Hired!
Reviewed by Ron Bel Bruno

When Bill Clinton was running for the job of President, he and his aides regularly rehearsed rigorous press-conference queries. Even if the new position you're campaigning for is a few rungs down the ladder from president, you probably could benefit from the same mock-interview process: Some job interviewers are known to be as tough as a Washington Post reporter.

You're Hired! costs much less than the job advisers Clinton hired and provides a thorough roster of classic interview questions to prepare you for any type of employment interview, whether you're a job-hunting novice or a seasoned professional. The program covers the crucial interview points and also acts as a reassuring coach. It discusses tough question-and-answer sessions in which you might be asked to speak negatively of your previous employers (you shouldn't), recount an embarrassing situation (keep it business-related), or discuss salary requirements (never during the first interview). It leaves few questions unasked.

Although You're Hired! has great appeal for anyone looking for employment, it really hits the mark for recent college graduates new to the interview process, homemakers returning to the work force who need to brush up on interview skills, and those who are either changing careers or hitting the interview circuit after many years at the same job.

The evaluation version's database of 25 standard interview questions (boosted to 75 upon registration) can be reviewed in its entirety or tagged for drills that hone in on specific areas. Each question includes two data fields, one of which is an Advice box containing three concise lines of pointers on answering the question. To the question "What are your biases?," the Advice box prompts you to discuss your prejudice against "people who make my job more difficult by not working hard." When the PC-based interviewer asks "What major trends do you see in our industry?," the Advice box reminds you to cite positive trends.

There's also a Notes field into which you insert your own comments and response suggestions. Throughout the question-and-answer period, the program monitors your response time with a running clock in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. You can add your own   job-specific questions to You're Hired! and create custom drills. If you're a salesperson, for example, you can devise a group of questions hand-picked to make you shine: "Explain your best sales presentation and how you created it?," or "Identify three winning techniques you've used to close a telemarketing pitch." (Then cross your fingers and hope they ask these questions during the actual interview.)

The program's author suggests augmenting the on-screen drill by tape-recording your spoken answers for replay and review. For even more effective rehearsal, the manual suggests using a full-length mirror to evaluate your facial expressions, mannerisms and overall appearance.

For the $30 registration fee, you get the latest version, 50 more interview questions, a bound user's manual, one year of free telephone tech support, e-mail or conventional mail, and future notification of major upgrades. You're Hired! is a worthwhile career tool for job-seekers who want a little prodding and coaching before pounding the pavement. High-school guidance counselors and college advisors can make great use of the program in job-training seminars or distribute a custom version it to students as a summary of points covered in class.

Program Information: You're Hired!

ViruScan

Reviewed by Sally Neuman

McAffee Associates, nationally recognized authorities on viral infection of computer systems and viral eradication, has released a Windows version of its popular ViruScan product that's a must have for anyone working a lot in the Windows environment.

Scan for Windows, a $35.00 shareware product, shines when it comes to installation and configuration. Like most Windows applications and utilities, it is simply a matter of copying the files from the distribution file or diskette into your Windows directory and then running WINSTALL.EXE from the Program Manager menu bar to properly install Scan for Windows.

Scan for Windows uses two main programs to run under the Windows environment, and one of those two programs also works well in the DOS environment. Scan for Windows is the Windows shell for the program, and SCAN.EXE is the DOS executable file you can use both in Windows and in native DOS.

Both WSCAN.EXE and SCAN.EXE are the main engines of Scan for Windows, providing you with automatic or manual scanning capability, depending on how you choose to configure and use the program. In addition, Scan for Windows comes with its own "validation" program that you use to validate the files from the distribution file or diskette so that you are certain they are sound, and have the correct file size and date. Scan for Windows also comes with a text file, VIRLIST.TXT, detailing the list of viruses Scan for Windows can currently detect.

Scan and Scan for Windows do more than just scan for viruses, however. It's important that you read the documentation so you can fully understand all the features available to you.

For example, if configured properly, Scan for Windows and Scan will: validate all files on the specified drives and directories to check each file for integrity; check your upper memory blocks for viral activity; delete infected files that Scan may have found on your hard drive; skip compressed files if you choose; scan your hard disk partition and boot sector for viral infection; disable Ctrl-C if you want the user to not be able to abort the scanning process; and save all current configuration options for you so that the next time you run the program, you simply type Scan instead of the command-line switches.

Companion products for Scan for Windows include Cleanup, a utility to remove all traces of viral infection, as well as several programs and utilities that work well in the Network environment.

Scan for Windows comes with full documentation on its abilities and features, and each of the programs included in the distribution file are also well documented. Each program is fully functional. Online help is available at all times to help you with syntax, procedures, or simply to provide more information about the programs McAffee provides.

Scan for Windows, similar to most all of the McAffee products, comes capable of displaying in both the French and Spanish dialects, and is an Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP) product.

Scan for Windows is one of many antiviral products on the market today, in both the commercial and shareware arena. What sets it apart from most of the more familiar packages is that it is designed to help protect against what are called "polymorphic" or "stealth" viruses, which are viruses that may not be detectable by some of the other standard viral integrity products. This feature is added protection for a virus still under development, because in many cases Scan can help alert you to the problem even though the software signature may not be in the Scan program yet.

The $35.00 registration fee brings you a current copy of the program on your chosen disk size and a nicely done program guide for using the program.
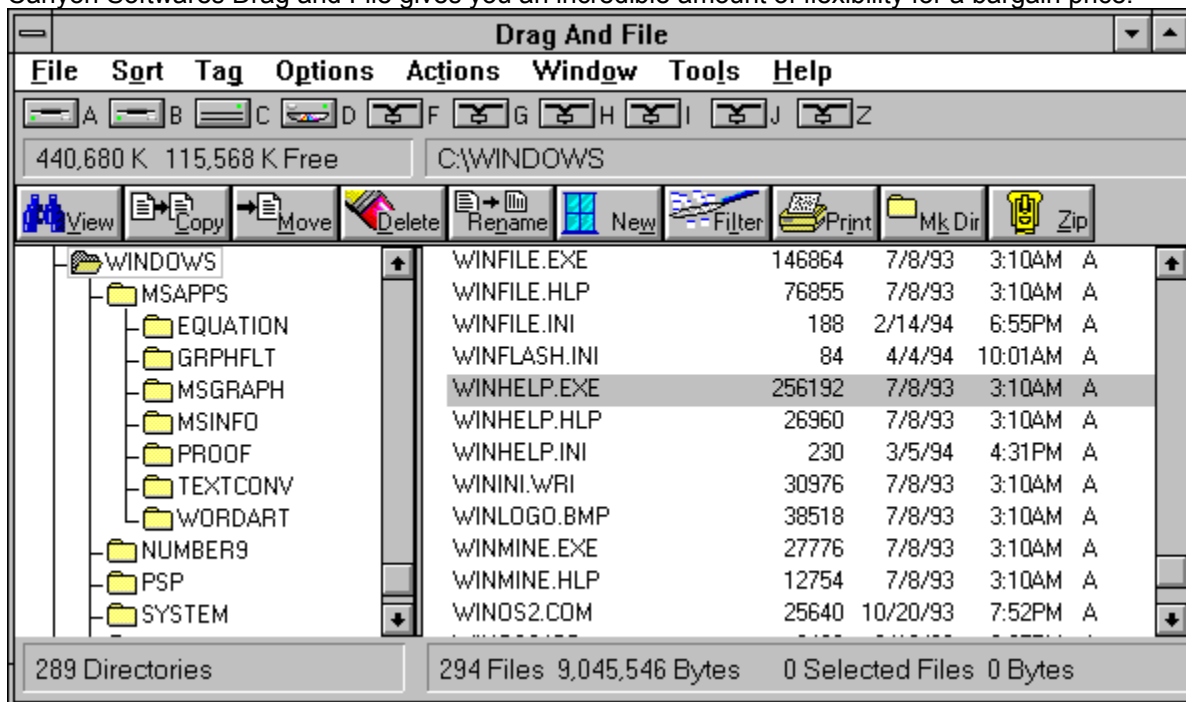
More Info.: ViruScan

Main Reviews Page

Drag and File

Reviewed by Scott Arpajian

There are a lot of Windows enthusiasts, but very few people enjoy working with the Windows File Manager. Thats because for all the ease of use that Windows provides, dealing with this awful program can drive even the biggest Windows fan back to the DOS prompt. Up until now, the only answer was to spend a lot of money on a major application, such as PC Tools or the Norton Desktop for Windows. But Canyon Softwares Drag and File gives you an incredible amount of flexibility for a bargain price.

Drag and File supports all of the common file and directory commands, such as copying, deleting and renaming. Creating new directories is as simple as clicking a button. And as you might suspect from the title of the program, it supports full Windows drag and drop functionality to allow you to quickly work with files. Drag and File allows you to tag multiple files so that you can perform batch operations. It even features a graphical Drive Bar that allows you to quickly change drives.

Drag and File incorporates two of Canyon Softwares earlier releases, Drag and View and Drag and Zip. The viewer functions allow you to look at almost all of your text files and graphic images. Drag and Zip gives you an incredibly easy interface for working with ZIP-compressed archives. With this kind of flexibility and enhanced functionality, youll never have to run the Windows File Manager again.

More Info.: Drag and File

QuikMenu
Reviewed by Abe Rosner

More than just another graphical DOS shell, QuikMenu by OSCS Software Development Inc., is one of the most aesthetically pleasing menuing systems and DOS shells I've worked with.

QuikMenu provides a good-looking interface for users who are neither inclined to learn DOS commands or ready for the robustness of the Windows environment. It's also handy if you need to password-protect your programs or if you would like to add a few useful DOS utilities --calculator, calendar, phonebook, system log and a colorful array of screen-savers -- to your system without using up lots of disk space.

QuikMenu allows you to design as many as 40 menu screens. With the exception of the first screen, each screen starts out blank and is "painted" with buttons. You "paint" a button by defining first which program will be linked to it and then adding its physical attributes, including color, font, password and size. The button is then moved to where you think it should reside   on-screen.

Although this is all quite easy to do, QuikMenu is best set up by someone with some computer knowledge because the logical layout behind the menus is left to the imagination of the designer. The two most effective menu structures are functional and logically associated files. To avoid user confusion, for example, you can load QuikMenu in the AUTOEXEC.BAT startup file on all the systems, dedicating certain menus to either projects or applications. This installation helps protect users who are new to DOS path structures and commands from making an egregious error, such as formatting the hard disk or inadvertently deleting an entire disk directory.

DOS has been shipping with a configurable shell since version 4.0. What QuikMenu does differently from DOS or other famous shells like XTREE, is allow physical files to be completely hidden from the user. If you want your child to have access to your word-processing software but not your personal finance programs, for example, you could password-protect all but the   word-processing button, including the "FILES" button that gives access to disk maintenance commands such as rename, copy and delete.

For those who work on networked systems, E-mail can be accessed using QuikMenu. For network users, OSCS Software Development lowers its usual requested $35/US per system and offers a special price of $140 for a 10-user site license. QuikMenu's documentation is straightforward and well-written, but most of the program's features can be figured out by working with its intuitive design.

Mind you, QuikMenu is not a long-term substitute for computer literacy, but it does give novices a chance to be productive and navigate their personal computers without fear of imminent disaster. If you like DOS menuing systems or know someone who would benefit from using such an interface, you can't do better than QuikMenu.

More Info.: QuikMenu

Main Reviews Page

House Mouse
Reviewed by Doreen Maciak

If you're in the market for a new house, one of the most important questions you will ask is, How much can I afford. There are several ways to go about determining this, one of which will be a loan pre-qualification with a lending establishment. But even before you do that, wouldn't it be nice to know just what you can afford, at what interest rate, with points, taxes, insurance, etc? Luckily, you don't have to be a CPA or a banker to figure these things out. House Mouse Version 2.0 will run the numbers for you, in a snap.

This easy-to-use Windows amortization program, developed by Kestrel Computing Company Inc., features periodic and cumulative graphs of payment and equity information with immediate recalculation of monthly payments and a totals chart. House Mouse's unique feature is the mouse operated number scroll bars and spin buttons. Most all information can be entered without input from the keyboard.

There are printable entry and graph screens as well as selective tabular data. Prepayments, property tax, insurance factors can all be considered, as well as the borrowers gross income. This data can be exported to a spreadsheet importable file and your work can be saved or retrieved as needed.

Say, for example, you want to buy a house for 200,000 at 7.5% interest over 30 years. Simply plug in the numbers, click on the Amortize button, and you will find that your monthly payment is approximately $1,250 per month. House Mouse also goes a step further by calculating your PITI (principal, interest, taxes and insurance) rate, which in this case would amount to about $1,398.43 per month. These numbers will be presented to you in three easy-to-understand graphs. The first graph shows principal and interest for each payment. The middle graph shows principal and interest for the Life to Date (LTD), a cumulative depiction. In the equity graph, the total equity line is the sum of the down payment, the cumulative paid principal and appreciation/deprecation. Fair Market Value (FMV) reflects the appreciation/depreciation adjustment, which is represented by the A/D in the equity graph. You can choose the % Change option to estimate anticipated property value appreciation or depreciation over the

course of the mortgage. Depreciation is specified with negative values.

Autoload and AutoCalc are advanced bonus features that you can obtain when you register the shareware. AutoLoad refers to the association of a loan file with the House Mouse icon so that the file is automatically retrieved upon program startup. AutoCalc enables files to automatically calculate upon retrieval, displaying current date values in the graphs.

In addition to the bonus features, several other new features come in version 2.0, one of which is enhanced online help. Support is limited to questions on program function and you must be registered to get help. CompuServe users can write to ID 71763,35. Internet users address questions to Kestrel.Computing@Synocomm.Com. The author also may be available between 7-9pm EST at (201) 625-3595, or leave a message.

More Info.: House Mouse

Main Reviews Page

WinFlash

WINFLS.ZIP - PBS Home, Library 4 (Education)

WinFlash 3.0 lets you create educational flash cards in Windows designed with text, graphics, and sound elements. You design your own flashcard routines based on commented sample scripts and enter up to 1000-character questions and answers with any ASCII editor. Scripting can link .BMP and .WAV files to your routines to add pictures and sound action, too. You may also build foreign language learning routines using alphabets and dictionaries. WinFlash tracks performance on each question and answer and helps you focus on missed questions with its custom Auto Learn mode. WinFlash's windowed question and answer format is ideal for making trivia-type games, too. Shareware, $22.95. 143,661 bytes.

Money Smith

⭐⭐⭐⭐

MSMITH.ZIP - PBS Utilities, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
Money Smith is an alternative for those who want more than a checkbook program but less than a multi-module accounting system. A graphical toolbar and intuitive interactive interface combine to give you double-entry accounting in real time. Money Smith reports and graphs your work, letting you jump instantly to the most commonly used functions. A very attractive calculator is included, which features standard calculation functions as well as PV (present value), FV (compound calculation), Infix (algebra) and Postfix (Reverse Polish) calculations. Others features include investment tracking, budgeting, check printing, account category grouping, international currency support and automatic recurring transactions. This package allows the user to handle home and small business accounting like the big boys. Shareware, $15-$30.   325,186 bytes.

You're Hired

⭐⭐⭐

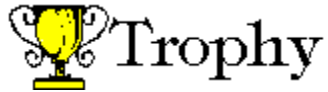### *YHIRED.ZIP - PBS Professional, Library 4 (Professional)*

You're Hired! helps you polish your job-hunting skills with its nerve-wracking simulations of job interviews. It asks challenging questions in a lifelike simulation and records elapsed times as you respond. It also doubles as an adviser: If you need help answering a question, you can press a key to receive advice. You can change the questions asked or create your own. All questions and advice can be printed. Shareware, $29.95. 209,700 bytes.

ViruScan

SCAN.ZIP - PBS Utilities, Library 3 (DOS Utilities)

McAfee's ViruScan checks an entire disk, including its subdirectories, for known viruses and variants. It includes a validation program to check for changes in files. Shareware, $25. 255,212 bytes.
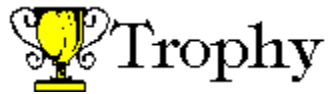
Drag and File

DRAGFL.ZIP - PBS Utilities, Library 4 (Windows Utilities)
Drag and File extends basic File Manager functions with powerful toolbar-launched, menu-driven features. Its on-screen Drivebar launches with a mouse click all directory and file information for each of your local and network drives, and the software handles up to 12 open drive windows simultaneously. Within each drive window Drag and File lets you tag, sort, filter, view, copy, move, delete, rename, print, make or remove directories and compress files from its point and shoot interface. This version is also packaged with a collection of Windows file utilities including Drag and View, Drag and Zip, Zip View, Fileman Launcher and File Update. Drag and View opens text files instantly while supporting word wrap and font selection. Drag and Zip is a quick lauching front end for PKWare and LHA file-compression software. ZipView displays compressed files. Fileman Launcher attaches and automatically executes up to 8 File Manager add-ons (like Drag and View or Drag and Zip) whenever File Manager opens. And File Updater automatically refreshes files as they are launched. Shareware, $69.95 .   824,438 bytes.
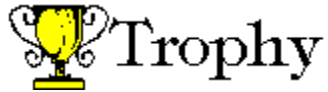
QuikMenu

Trophy

QKMENU.ZIP - PBS Utilities, Library 1 (Hot Off the Presses)
QuikMenu starts with a back-to-basics approach and adds flash and imagination to produce a dynamite product. It's a complete package of 40 sets of graphical menus for DOS, with 68 selections per menu. It also comes with password protection, command variables, and online help. It's mouse and network compatible, and it includes a text editor, file viewer, file manager, address book, calendar, and usage log. Shareware, $35. 328,914 bytes.

House Mouse

Trophy

HMW.ZIP - PBS Professional, Library 3 (Business & Finance)
House Mouse is an amortization program that is worth a look. The program features periodic and cumulative graphs of payment and equity information with immediate recalculation of monthly payments and a totals chart. A unique feature is the mouse operated number scroll bars and spin buttons. Most all information can be entered without input from the keyboard. There are printable entry and graph screens as well as selective tabular data. Prepayment, property tax and insurance factors can be considered, as well as the borrower's required gross income. The data can be exported to a spreadsheet importable file. Your work can be saved and retrieved. Shareware, $20. 138,794 bytes.

NeoBook

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NEOBK.ZIP.ZIP - PBS Applications, Library 4 (Windows)
NeoBook moves you into the electronic publishing age with its disk-based newsletters, books, and tutorials brought to life with color and graphics. Convey ideas using the enhanced features of today's interactive technology. Sculpturing your page inserting color or wallpapered graphics from PCX or GIF. There is a Title tool for highlights, page numbering, line drawing, and manual or imported word processor text. The compiler converts to ready to use stand-alone executable applications.   Screen help makes this easy to accomplish. Shareware, $45. 620,945 bytes.

Dave Riley

CEO NeoSoft Corp., Author of QuikMenu, NeoPaint, NeoShow and NeoBook

Author Profile

Name
Dave Riley

Computer System
486/33 CPU, 8MB Memory, 300MB HD, SoundBlaster, HP LaserJet. Occasionally I'll use a 12Mhz 286 just so I can see how a given program will perform on a less powerful system.

Favorite Text Editor
I mainly use the editor that came with Borland Pascal. For letter writing, I use WordPerfect.

Language/Compiler of Choice
Borland Pascal 7

Programming Hours
I used to work all day plus evenings and weekends. After realizing that I never had any time to enjoy the fruits of my labor I cut back my hours somewhat. I work a fairly normal day now, from 8:30 or 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM and an occasional Saturday or Sunday.

Favorite Programming Snack
I really don't eat very much while I'm working. In an office environment, it can be disconcerting for a prospective client or business contact to be led into an office to meet the company's CEO and see him choking down a corn dog. I do occasionally have a candy bar or a soda though.

Marital Status
I have been happily co-habitating with my significant other Diana for the past ten years.

Last Non-Computer Book Read
As preparation to answer these questions I took some time to read a few back issues of Author Spotlight. A few of the authors profiled worked close to 100 hours a week. That leaves only nine hours a day for eating, sleeping, bathing, driving and general life stuff. So how can these guys work so much and still read all those books?

Other Hobbies/Interests
I really enjoy hiking, gardening and running. I tend to like things that are environmentally friendly and don't disturb wildlife or other people.

Favorite Pizza Topping
I like everything on my pizza so it's really difficult for me to pick a single topping. However, if multi-topping pizzas were suddenly outlawed and I absolutely had no choice but to pick a single topping, assuming that cheese didn't count, I would probably pick mushrooms.

Biography

The majority of Dave's formal training is in the field of Art. He studied Filmmaking at the Art Institute of Chicago and took various art classes at a number of other colleges. Dave couldn't decide whether to be a cartoonist, writer, photographer or filmmaker.

Dave's first contact with computers was in th 80's, when he purchased one for writing college term papers. In fact, for many years he absolutely despised computers. Dave readily admits that his early

hatred of computers was out of jealousy: when he was attending high school, many of his friends had Apple II computers that consumed a great deal of their precious time, time that could have been spent outside doing things that teenagers do for fun - chasing girls, turning over cars, etc. Since he didn't own a computer myself, this was an activity that he didn't understand and couldn't participate in. Then again, Dave was too busy chasing girls and turning over cars to let it bother him.

When he finally got his first computer in college, one of the programs that came with it was everyone's favorite programming language: BASIC. Soon he was writing some really useless programs that did things that no one would ever want. Instead of releasing them as Shareware, he put them in the closet and kept writing and learning. Eventually he tried other languages such as Modula II, C and Pascal and began creating more useful and better programs. Occasionally, he would get to cultivate his computer skills by writing a program for a local business. Dave mentions that it didn't take long before he discovered that writing programs for other people, while good experience, wasn't nearly as fun as writing them for himself.

A few years and literally hundreds of programs later, he decided to start his own business and sell one of the software programs he had created. He asked Glen Tippetts, with whom he had worked at a local computer store, to join the venture. Glen tended to the administrative aspects of the company which allowed Dave to concentrate on software development. That first program eventually evolved into QuikMenu and was followed by NeoPaint, NeoShow, and NeoBook. Since 1990, NeoSoft Corp. (formally OSCS) has grown to include 14 full time employees and over 100,000 registered users in more than 70 countries.

What is Dave's most valued experience so far? He says it's his art background, which proves extremely useful when it comes to creating software. He explains that there are so many elements in programming where artistic skills can be beneficial. According to Dave, screen designs, user interfaces, menus, and believe it or not, even a well-crafted algorithm can be a work of art.

More Info.: NeoBook

ZiffNet is the online information service all about computing. It is the first place to turn for the best in software, plus all kinds of useful information about buying, using, supporting and understanding personal computer products.

Created by Ziff Communications, publisher of the leading PC and Macintosh magazines, ZiffNet brings together the best in downloadable freeware and shareware selected for quality and reliability, discussion forums where you can talk to industry leaders and product experts, buying advice to help you make the best purchasing decisions, technical support to help you get the most from your PC, and computing news to keep you up-to-date on the industry. In addition, ZiffNet gives you access to editors and writers from the major Ziff publications, including *PC Magazine, PC/Computing, PC Week, MacUser, MacWEEK, Computer Shopper* and *Windows Sources*.

The ZiffNet membership fee is just $2.50 a month. Standard CompuServe connect-time charges apply for certain services like downloading software. For more information on the rates please check online.

For details on how to sign up for ZiffNet, please see Downloading from ZiffNet

PRODIGY members can [JUMP]: **ziffnet** for full details on the ZiffNet for PRODIGY service.

About the Ratings

All of the shareware ZiffNet offers is provided through Public Brand Software, one of the leading vendors of shareware in the world. PBS has the largest dedicated staff of professional reviewers in the industry, and each program is put through rigorous testing before it becomes available online.

Part of the review process is the assignment of a program rating. This rating is measured is stars, on a scale from 1 to 4. In addition, the best programs for a particular computer task are assigned a "Trophy" rating (5 stars).

So You Want To Be A Shareware Author
by Timothy Campbell

In part 3 of this article, Timothy Campbell explores the trials, tribulations and rewards of pursuing a career as a shareware author.

So you've got your new shareware program coded, debugged and ready to go. Now what?   Many new authors think that you simply have to upload or mail out a few copies and let the magic of shareware take over: people will pass around copies of your program, saving you the trouble of distribution. Then, it's simply a matter of sitting back and waiting for the money to start rolling in.

There's only one problem with this plan: it won't work.

In the very early days of shareware, people were more willing to pass around a shareware program. The idea was new and exciting and people were eager to encourage this kind of software distribution. Nowadays, however, shareware distribution channels are well defined and people no longer feel an urgent need to pass around shareware. After all, they know there will be plenty more coming down the pipe, so why bother helping? This is the new reality of shareware and it is unfortunate that countless authors have met with frustration (or even financial disaster) waiting for it to work the way it did ten years ago.

These days, it is up to you to get your product into the shareware distribution channels. Good distribution can cost several thousand dollars, though there are many ways to keep your costs much lower. Even so, a few thousand dollars is a pittance compared to the traditional method of distributing and advertising software, which can cost you half a million dollars before you've sold even a single copy of your program.

As a shareware author, your job is not just about programming. Paul Ligeski of Servantware tells us "Most of the time is spent trying to get distributors to carry your product. Say 30%. Another 20% is spent registering customers. 10% on CompuServe. 15% working on the next version." Very few authors spend the majority of their time programming, unless they have a staff to handle the other aspects of the business.

Modem Methods

One of the oldest methods for distributing shareware is via modem -- either through a BBS or through a telecomputing service such as ZiffNet. Many authors maintain that this is still the best way to get your product into the hands of end users. There are several ways to get your programs onto such systems. The most obvious to get an account on the system. This allows you to ensure that your program is placed on the right lists, with the right descriptions. It also lets you monitor download activity.

Another method is to use a modem-oriented distribution service, such as FidoNet's SDN service or the upload services provided by Andrew Saucci or Casey Butler. (The file SDNKIT.EXE can be downloaded from CompuServe's ASPFORUM, Library 1. Andrew Saucci can be reached via email at 72117,241. Casey Butler is at 72043,46.)

Finally, most services will accept disks direct from the authors. This last method, however, is the least reliable, because the sysop may not have the time or inclination to put your program on his system, or if he does, he may give it a short or inaccurate description.   Moreover, most BBS's advertise their phone number only and leave out the address, so sometimes it's hard to know where to send the disk in the first

place!

More recently, authors have been sending their software to FTP (File Transfer Protocol) sites on the giant Internet network. This network promises to be the backbone of shareware distribution, though at present response for PC and Macintosh shareware has been less than inspiring, perhaps because of the heavy Unix orientation of InterNet users.

One problem that affects all modem-oriented distribution is the "Top Of the List" syndrome.   When a program is added to a BBS's download list, there is a flurry of download activity. A few weeks later, though, newer programs come along and the older programs are forgotten. Some authors try to overcome this by issuing trivial updates every few weeks, but they run the risk of acquiring a bad reputation and having their submissions ignored.

User Groups

Another traditional method of distributing shareware is by handing it out at user group meetings. However, you would be hard pressed to find an author who still finds this technique profitable. When it comes to software distribution, user groups have been largely overshadowed by bulletin board systems. You should spend your time and money elsewhere.

Disk Vendors and Racks

Many people were introduced to shareware by shareware disk vendors, who sell through the mail or more recently via racks in stores. There are literally hundreds of disk vendors but most of these are small and will not provide you with any income at all unless you have a truly earth-shattering program. Your best bet is to get a list of the top 25 vendors and make your best pitch to them, rather than spreading out your efforts on several hundred vendors. (Such lists are posted occasionally in the UKSHARE or ASPFORUM forums on CompuServe, or are distributed by shareware trade associations such as STAR, ASP or ESC.) Small vendors can be reached via an author-to-vendor CD-ROM service, which I will describe later.

In addition to putting shareware racks in stores, some vendors have "Low Cost Retail" racks.   These racks do sell not shareware but registered copies, usually for less than ten dollars, from which you get a royalty of between 25 cents and a dollar.   This is, of course, much less than you are used to getting for a registered copy, but the LCR vendor will handle all duplication, packaging and marketing, and can sometimes move thousands of copies in a year.   Some authors consider LCR to be the "wave of the future" for shareware authors. Be sure to have a lawyer look at any contracts you sign, because some LCR vendors have been known to write some fairly one-sided contracts.

Positioned conceptually between regular shareware rackware and LCR rackware is "royalty rackware".   If you have an exceptional product that is in great demand, you can sometimes get rackware vendors to pay you a small royalty for each shareware copy he sells.   If you think your product is eligible for this kind of treatment, be sure to forbid non-royalty rack distribution in your licensing terms (which are usually set forth in your package in a text file named VENDOR.DOC).

Direct Mail

Some authors market their wares through direct mail.   You can get mailing lists of targetted

audiences from a mailing-list company and mail promotional material to potential customers.   You may wish to offer shareware versions to these people, or you may decide to simply offer "low cost solutions". Direct mail is a difficult business based on razor-thin profit margins so you should consult with a direct mail professional before choosing this method.

   For a pamphlet explaining some techniques for direct mail advertising, write to 21st Century Marketing (a mailing list vendor) at 2 Dubon Court, Farmingdale, NY, USA 11735-1008, or fax your request to 516-293-8974. You can also get a mailing list catalog and newsletter from Direct Media, 200 Pemberwick Road, P.O. Box 4565, Greenwich, CT, USA 06830 (or fax your request to 203-531-1452).

CD-ROMs

   Many vendors are taking advantage of the vast capacity of CD-ROMs to sell bundles of shareware. One good thing about CD-ROMs is that users can not delete your product if they don't need it at the moment -- it's depressing to think of how many shareware programs have been deleted by users who simply needed a fresh diskette! Thus, if you can get your product on a CD-ROM, it can have a long life. There are, however, three significant problems with CD-ROMs...

   First of all, a lot of vendors are engaged in what has been called "Shovelware". That is to say, they fill up the CD-ROM with anything that comes to hand, which means that high-quality programs are packed in with some very poor software. A second problem is that with all that software on the disk, your program is lost in the crowd. This is particularly nasty for game programs since a user with a choice of 100 shareware games is much less likely to order the sequel to your game. The third problem is that once you have an old version on a CD-ROM, it may keep coming back to haunt you -- which is very annoying if you have newer versions or if (heaven forbid) you have released a version with a serious bug.

   One of the best applications of CD-ROM technology is the "Author-To-Vendor" distribution service. Two disk vendors (JCS Marketing and Public (Software) Library) collect software from authors and sell the collection to small disk vendors.   When you get your product onto an Author-To-Vendor CD-ROM, you have the potential to reach several hundred vendors, each of whom represents hundreds of customers.

   You can write to Public (Software) Library at P.O. Box 35705, Houston, TX, USA 77235, or phone 713-721-5205.   JCS Marketing can be reached at P.O. Box 1216, Lakeville, MN, USA 55044.   Phone or fax to: 612-469-5898; CompuServe address 71543,173.   Both companies are very helpful to new shareware authors.

Some General Principles

   With all these channels (modems, disks, CD-ROMs etc.) you can get your product into the hands of tens of thousands of potential users. But in order to get into the channel, you must survive something that I call "Distributor Triage". Here is an example of how it works...

   When a disk vendor gets your package, he has to make a "first glance evaluation".   Since he gets a hundred disks or more per week, he has to make some snap decisions in order to have adequate time to evaluate the better offerings.

   For most vendors, diskettes with hand-lettered labels will go straight into the garbage. If that happens, it doesn't matter how good your program is; its career is over, as far as that vendor is concerned. Next, the vendor will look at other tell-tale signs that he is dealing with an amateur. If your cover letter is printed on an 8-pin matrix printer, it will reflect badly on your offering.

   If you want to get your product accepted, you should have all your materials laser-printed (or better), and use proper diskette labels (also laser-printed). If you do not have a laser printer, find somebody who

will let you use theirs. It's that important.

Far too many authors have scuttled their product by marketing it in a less than enthusiastic manner. This technique is commonly known as "What-the-Heckware". If you are serious about your product, you should read up on direct-mail marketing techniques -- or even take a course. This investment will pay off handsomely in increased product exposure and more registrations.

Distribution and Patience

George Campbell of Ososoft has this advice for new authors: "Be patient. Being a shareware author is not a get-rich-quick scheme, but takes years before it becomes a money-making proposition. Don't give up your day job." Most experienced shareware authors stress the need for patience.

Once your product is out the door, it may take a long time before you see a your first registration. This is particularly true if your main channel is through disk vendors. Consider the delays: you mail to the vendor; the disk sits on the vendor's desk; the disk gets reviewed; the vendor waits a few weeks for the next catalog; the catalog is printed then ambles through the mail to the customer; the customer reads the catalog; the customer orders an evaluation disk ... and so on. All this can take months.

During those months, you can work on your next version.   Or you can continue to market what you've got.   When in doubt, give priority to marketing rather than programming.   Jim Hass of MicroFox suggests, "Distribute your product everywhere, everyway, and as often as you can." Randy MacLean of FormGen is even more emphatic when he insists, "Distribution is everything"!   Remember that nobody can register your program unless they try it, and they can't try it if you haven't done a good job getting it into distribution channels.

Moreover, don't limit yourself to one or two channels. Gary Elfring of Elfring Soft Fonts advises, "If you stick soley to shareware you aren't going to ever make much money. Cover your bases and market your software every way you can. If you don't know how to market software, join up with someone who does."

Once you've got all the bugs ironed out of your distribution plan, you'll know the satisfaction that comes from having people register something that you created from scratch. It's a great feeling and makes every registration check worth double!

How does one succeed in shareware?   Jerry Medlin of Medlin Accounting Shareware, who has been writing shareware since 1984, sums it up succinctly: "Write good stuff and be patient." It seems so obvious, doesn't it?