

Club hare

When you buy software in a box, you are paying for packaging, disks, manuals, support and sales people, floor space or transportation, and so on. Electronic distribution in theory could make software much cheaper.

However, distribution by 'net or CD-ROM usually means shareware, and shareware products generally meet with limited success. It is just too inconvenient to send off full payments to each little game or font or utility you might use a few times.

It's a nasty Catch-22: sending \$10-30 for a shareware item may exceed its real value to you; but sending only a dollar or two isn't worth the bother.

Club Share proposes a third option: pay-per-use software. You pay only for products you use, only what they're worth to you, in a single lump sum. Your payment might include only pennies for some products, dollars for others, depending on what you used most.

In return, you get the benefits that shareware producers reserve for their paying customers, like additional features, new programs, updates, and technical support, depending on your level of patronage.

You can alter or reject any shareware fee request, or just edit the figures on your invoice. You might divide your shareware budget to spread a little to everyone, or just pick a few favourites to pay in full. You send in the bill, by snail-mail or e-mail, and get back a receipt (possibly with new software offerings) by return mail.

Software developers get an easy connection with their users, a distribution channel for updates and new products, and simplified payment collection. Users and authors receive each others' addresses, so direct contact can be made for payment verification or other exchange of information.

We need Macintosh users and software authors to help test this concept, with pretend money to start. (Discounts or other incentives to be arranged for early sign-ons!)

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Fee cripts

METER makes it easy for shareware to propose fees to users. You can ask recognition as shareware, display messages, set or change your address, propose a payment scheme, or enter individual billing items. METER then handles all long-term storage, periodic calculations, or other maintenance, until the user is ready to assemble a complete shareware invoice.

The simplest way to declare a fee request is to write a short script beginning with the phrase "Club Share info". When that text is copied to the clipboard, METER reads it, then presents your fee structure to the user in a dialog. METER saves the user's decision, and reports it to you, again via the clipboard.

You can perform the copy from your code, or just include the script in your documentation and ask consenting users to select and copy it. Some examples:

Club Share info. Name: "Woolly Mammoth Preservation League". Sign: "Wool".
Address: "Kluane Lake Research Station, Yukon, Y1A 3V4".
Item: "Tax-deductible donation.", \$5.
Item: "Order our latest newsletter.", \$2.50 per issue.
Lock ON.

Club Share info. Sign is "SRGG".
Name is "Some Really Great Game". Address: "jchretien@ottawa.gov".
Rate is \$1.50 per user hour. Maximum \$5/month. Items OK. Lock ON.

Club Share info. Sign is "SRGG".
Item: "Unlock next level?", \$0.25.

Club Share info. Name: "The Joke File". Sign = "HaHa" (address on file at Club Share). Item:
"Jokes", \$0.05 each, quantity 4.

Club Share info. Name: "zApple INIT". Sign is "zNit" (on file at Club Share).
Rate: \$0.50 per month. Maximum \$15 ever.
Item: "Order my full-featured version" for \$5.
Lock ON.

In a fee script, 'Lock On' means that your fee settings will be 'locked' so that the dialog will not be repeated needlessly in the future. Also, it protects your address and other info from accidental changes.

Each phrase must end with period-space or a new line. The period must come AFTER any quotes. Always use the \$ sign for money figures.

After a couple of seconds, METER will replace the message with one of its own. You can paste it and check it out.

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Programmers

You can send fee descriptions to METER by copying a string to the public clipboard, like this:

```
ZeroScrap();  
err = PutScrap(stringlengthShort, 'TEXT', stringstartPtr);
```

To check METER's reply, after a few seconds' idle time do this:

```
stringHandle = NewHandle(0);  
err = GetScrap(stringHandle, 'TEXT', &junkShort);
```

If you need direct or immediate access to the dialog or return data, you can establish real-time contact with METER through a mediating XFCN. For more information about the XFCN or the syntax of shareware-fee scripts, contact us at the address given in the Welcome chapter.