The Alternate Source

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To:

"TAS UPDATE #6"

FOUR-PERCENT SOFTWARE WANTED!

Even though the main purpose of the TAS Update is to try and sell you some of our software, it may be that we'd like to buy some of yours. Right now we're particularly looking for some good educational software.

There's a lot of so-called "educational" software on the market, but most of it is either 1) not available for the TRS-80, or 2) not that great. The September issue of Psychology Today quotes Executive Director Kenneth Komoski of the Educational Products Information Exchange (a nonprofit group based at Teachers College, Columbia University and affiliated with Consumers Union) as saying that "only about one in four products met minimum technical and instructional standards, and only about three or four out of 100 were considered excellent." The magazine goes on to say that experts are particularly critical of the "electronic notebook" approach of some programs, the most common category of which involves "drill and practice" type programs - yet 49 percent of the programs on the market take this approach.

One final piece of information from the Psychology Today article: 49 percent of the computers in the schools last fall were Apples. Guess who came in second place? Yep, it was Radio Shack with 21 percent (Commodore was the third most popular with only 15 percent). Seems like every part-time programmer and their brother is trying to crack the Apple educational market, but the TRS-80 field is wide open.

(Buy, beg or borrow a copy of the September, 1984 issue of Psychology Today, which features several articles on the topic of Computer Education. Even if you don't read anything else in that issue, be sure to read the article entitled "Fred Keller-The Revolutionary Gentleman" starting on page 42. This is a very thought-provoking article for anyone with any interest in the field of education.)

TAS is looking for the four per cent - one of those three or four out of 100 programs that will really encourage the learning process. Any grade level and subject is fair game (well, ALMOST any subject - there are a FEW we won't touch!). Help make learning fun again, and get paid for it to boot. If you want to discuss your ideas for educational software with us, feel free to call or write!

MYSTERY KILLER ON THE LOOSE

Yes, it's a real mystery. The victims are dropping like flies. These were friends, trusted and true, and now they're gone. It seems so senseless, and we ask ourselves "WHY??" Only one now remains, and has been losing weight and now appears to be going "MAD."

What is killing all of the TRS-80 related publications? Several have succumbed in the past few months. Of all the glossy TRS-80 Model I/III/4 -oriented publications, only 80-Micro remains, and yes, if you have seen the front cover of the September, 1984 issue, you'll know why I say that they're going "MAD."

But wait - from out of the North comes a stranger. Lean but not mean, and packed with valuable information for your TRS-80. Perhaps the finest serious publication left for the TRS-80 user, and it's available to you FREE with any order from TAS. It's a 24 page newsletter called NORTHERN BYTES, and issue #6 is now available. If you don't wish to place an order at this time, you can keep your name on the TAS active mailing list AND get the current issue (or any of back

issues #1 - #5) of Northern Bytes for only $2.00. If it bothers you that Northern Bytes doesn't have fancy artwork on the cover like 80-Micro, throw in an extra buck and we'll throw in a copy of MAD Magazine. You can then remove the cover from MAD and put it around Northern Bytes, and you'll have the same effect (except we have better articles inside!). Get your copy of Northern Bytes TODAY - with such a good deal, they won't last long!

TASMON SURPRISE

You can save some money if you hurry. But that's not the surprise.

TASMON has been one of our best selling products. That's no surprise. After all, TASMON is a super monitor program, plus more.

What's a monitor program? It has nothing to do with your video display (which is also sometime referred to as a "monitor"). If you program strictly in BASIC, you need a BASIC monitor, like our STOPPER package. If you know TRS-80 Z80 machine language programming (or would like to learn), then you need a Z80 machine language monitor. TASMON is a Z80 machine language monitor program that helps you to examine the operation of a program while it's running. In TASMON there are several commands that aid in this process, but the most useful are the commands to single-step and trace a program. When you single step a program, the Z-80 mnemonic of each instruction is displayed, as well as the contents of all Z-80 registers. Press a button, and the next Z-80 instruction is executed, and the register display changes to show the new contents of all registers. Trace works the same way except it's semi-automatic - you don't have to keep pushing a button to execute the next instruction, but you can still interrupt the running program.

What this means is that TASMON puts YOU in control of your machine language programs. No more running a newly-assembled program and having it lock up your system while you scratch your head and wonder what went wrong. TASMON also has a full disassembler. Now you can load your machine language OBJECT code (or someone else's) into memory, and TASMON will display the Z-80 SOURCE code for the instructions used in that code. You can route the disassembly to video, printer, or disk, and yes, it's a "labelling" type disassembler (the only type to get!).

The SURPRISE is that TASMON just got better. It's now available for the Models 4 and 4P (in the native Model 4 mode, which means it runs under TRSDOS 6.x). And, ALL versions of TASMON have been upgraded to include some new features. These include:

ABILITY TO DISPLAY UNDOCUMENTED OPCODES - Now TASMON won't choke when it encounters a useable opcode that is not part of the standard set documented by Zilog.

ASCII DISPLAY DURING DISASSEMBLY to video or printer - This permits you to easily pick out text messages during a disassembly.

DISPLAY OF LAST SEVEN INSTRUCTIONS EXECUTED in single step or trace modes (make that "last 15 instructions" in the Model 4 version). No more wondering how you got where you are now while tracing a program!

NEW <O> (MEMORY COMPARE) COMMAND ADDED: The "O" command will compare two blocks of memory and report the first occurrence of any differences. What's the difference between the "patched" and "unpatched" versions of a program? If both will fit into memory at the same time, TASMON can tell you!

NEW KEYBOARD DRIVER ROUTINE IN MODEL III VERSION ONLY: Some folks have reported problems running the Model III version of TASMON on a Model 4 (in the Model III mode). This change should eliminate those problems (we hope!).

Unfortunately, because of inflation and the addition of these upgrades, we are going to raise the price of TASMON from $29.95 to $39.95 effective November 1, 1984. The GOOD news is that if you order now, you can get the upgraded version at the former price of $29.95! Registered owners of Model I and III versions of TASMON can get upgraded to the new version for only $10 (and you get a free Northern Bytes to boot!). If you were so unlucky as to get version 1.00 of TASMON4 (which had a few bugs, sorry about that) you may upgrade to the new version for only $3.00 to cover shipping, handling and a new diskette.

Special note to TRSDOS 6.2 users - the original version of TASMON4 won't work with TRSDOS 6.2. We hope to have the problem fixed shortly, but if you need TRSDOS 6.2 compatibility, you'd best say so when you order to avoid disappointment. This is not to be confused with 06.01.02, which is the current "free" version from Radio Shack. Rumor has it that 6.2 will cost approximately $40 if you wish to upgrade.

Don't miss this chance to get an improved monitor program at the old pre-inflation price. If you put off ordering, you might forget and miss the deadline, so why not put your order in the mail today?

WE ARE HAUNTED

No, we don't need the Ghostbusters. That's not how we're haunted. But perhaps you could help us get rid of our spectre from the past.

It all started when we created a bound volume of the first six issues of the TAS Programmer's Journal. A dealer in Pennsylvania ordered 50 of them. When they arrived, he set them in the corner of his store, and guess what happened? Yep, they got buried under some other boxes. So this summer he decided to do some cleaning, and found he was "haunted" by these old copies of Bound Volume 1. He called us to see if we could help, and nice guys that we are, we bought the whole carton back from him.

So now we've got the books back. Will we now be "haunted" with them forever? Not likely, considering the number of requests we've had for the book since we ran out. I seriously doubt that they'll gather any dust around here! In fact, if you want a copy, you'd best order today. Single copies are $14.95 each, or you can get a set of both Bound Volumes (1 & 2) for only $29.95. That's a $5 savings since BV#2 was originally $19.95.

Help us clean out our "haunts", and get a collector's item for your TRS-80 library. Order today to avoid disappointment!

COMPILE YOUR BASIC PROGRAMS

BASIC is a language that is easy to program. It is also SLOW. If you've ever written any fairly complex BASIC programs, you may have been bothered by the time it takes to execute certain portions of the program.

One way to speed up BASIC programs is to compile them. This changes the program from BASIC to machine language, and it will then run much faster. We have two different compilers, both from WittSoft, a leader in compilers for the TRS-80.

VIVACE!, WittSoft's newest product, will take any BASIC program that will run under regular BASIC and make it run faster. The advantage of VIVACE! is that you do not have to change so much as a single line of your BASIC program before you compile it. VIVACE! currently comes in two versions: One works with TRSDOS 6.x and Model 4 BASIC, while the other works with TRSDOS 1.3 and Model III BASIC. Sorry, no other models or operating systems are supported at this time. Consideration for supporting other TRS-80 operating systems will depend entirely on profitability of supporting the current two systems.

WIBASIC is an integer compiler, which means it cannot handle floating-point numbers (numbers with a fractional part, such as 123.45). However, the compiled code created by WIBASIC will run under ANY Model I or III compatible operating system (it will run on the 4 or 4P in the Model III mode). If you are trying to compile an existing BASIC program, you may have to make some changes before it will run under WIBASIC. However, creating and editing programs under WIBASIC is made easy by a special "memory compile" feature that compiles the program in memory (WITHOUT destroying the source code, as most other compilers do), then (if there were no compilation errors) executes the program and returns to WIBASIC at the end. Creating or debugging is as easy as under regular interpretive BASIC!

Programs compiled using either of these fine compilers may be freely distributed without further payment of royalties to WittSoft and/or The Alternate Source, provided certain conditions are met (these are explained in the documentation). WIBASIC sells for $89.95 while VIVACE! is $49.95 (when ordering VIVACE! specify Model III or Model 4 version). Life is too short to be spent waiting for a computer, so order now and speed up those sluggish BASIC programs!

DOWN WITH HEAVY MANUALS DEPARTMENT

Thank you, Hardin Brothers, for selecting ALE as your favorite editor in the September issue of 80 Micro. We have just completed printing a brand new ALE manual which is 50 pages smaller than the original 150+ page manual, but contains more (and better arranged) information about how to use ALE! Ron Zajac went through our ALE file of customer correspondence, restructured information, clipped out redundancies and incorporated several suggestions from users, including more sample sessions, a detailed index and further explanations of certain complex commands. We believe the new manual will be quite valuable to everyone! If you are a registered ALE owner, the manual is available for only $10. Newcomers can purchase ALE with its sleek, new manual for only $49.95.

Model 4 ALE users: There is a small bug when responding to parameters if you try to use the true Model 4 control key. The key will continuously repeat. A fix can be applied if you have a monitor program or patch capability with your disk operating system. At hex address 5AEE, you should find a zero-seven (07). Change this to zero-F (0F). If you would like us to perform the upgrade, we will ship you a new disk, if you are ordering the new manual, for $5. You MUST specify your ALE serial number when requesting this service. If your ALE is shipped with the new manual, mentioned above, this patch is already applied.

TALK ABOUT VERTICAL MARKETS

Newdos/80 and/or DosPlus users and ALE and/or EDM users, Ron Zajac has prepared two special macro diskettes that can be used with both EDM and ALE. Both the DosPlus and NewDos/80 versions are included on the respective diskettes.

Macro Disk #3 contains a program that will assist you with organizing disk information for larger projects. 1000 files can be sorted, columnated and indexed, either as a disk file or perhaps for storing in a text register for quick reference. Directories are inserted directly into the EDM/ALE main buffer. Once the buffer contains directories from the chosen diskettes, you may sort, columnate and index the entire group of files for printing, saving to a disk file for later editing or storing in an editor buffer for reference while working on a project! Ideal for large projects. This product was developed to help TAS staffers with documentation projects. MD #3 is $20.

Macro Disk #4 contains graphic development tools for use with EDM and ALE. A more extensive graphics support system will be announced Real Soon Now, but MD #4, the EDM/ALE Pixel Package is available immediately, only $20. PP allows direct manipulation of the TRS-80 graphic pixels in the EDM/ALE environment. Once the graphic screen is developed, utilities are provided that assist with converting the screen data to numeric data for processing as space compression character strings, of valuable use to BASIC programmers and a BASIC cursor motion string to assist with graphic editing. The pixels can be converted to numeric (x,y) co-ordinates that can be easily converted to BASIC data statements for fancy animation processing.

SPECIAL EDITION SNEAK PREVIEW

Your TRS-80 Model I will smile everytime you do disk I/O, be it single and double density (with Shack doublers and others'), single and double sided, 35, 40 and 80 track, if you stop what you're doing and order a copy of the TAS Special Edition #19. Paul Snively's article on Model I disk I/O alone is worth the price of the book, but you'll get much more! Order today!

We now have just over 100 orders for the edition, so we ARE planning on printing. If you order before the day we ship (Real Soon Now, by the time you get this), you can still take advantage of the pre-publication special, only $15. After publication, disk and book will be $19.95. #19 is an excellent way to keep your name on the TAS Active List and get a FREE copy of Northern Bytes #6.

PUT ON YOUR THINKING CAPS...

Thinking Skills is a set of programs designed to teach logic and problem-solving thinking skills. This program is geared for the second to sixth grader and has a reading level of about fourth grade. We are stocking only the "school" version of the program, which is $49.95. The additional documentation (not included with "home" version) assists the parent when it is necessary to assume the role of teacher.

Thinking Skills is three programs (GEMIMI, SORT-A-SET and CODE QUEST) that give students experience in identifying concepts, forming categories and applying rules in order to achieve stated goals.

GEMINI requires primary students to define how a rule has been determined by choosing the feature of an object which is the basis for the rule. The program combines the skills of discrimination, concrete concepts and rules.

SORT-A-SET asks students to form their own rules by sorting ten objects. Students must sort these ten

objects into two categories and then sort each of these two categories into two more categories. The result is four categories with one category set aside as the student's own category. The goal is to sort objects in such a way that the student's category ends up containing more objects than any of the other categories. This program reads at the second grade level, but is a challenge even for the sixth grader.

CODE QUEST is the best with its secret decoding discovery-LOGIC! The student must logically put together the clues of the code with disjunctive concepts to unravel the computer's secret code. Codes are only two to three parts long, but the students are given only eight trial codes in Level One and twelve trial codes in Level Two. Students gain experience using negative concepts as a logical tool. This program is fun for everyone and requires only a third grade reading level.

The programs in Thinking Skills make an excellent addition to your collection of educational software.

LAST MINUTE ADDITIONS...

=> BAS34 is now compiled and WOW! is it faster. We were able to translate three very large programs from Model 3 to Model 4 in about 10 minutes. Send us your master disk and a postpaid mailer and upgrades are free. Phone upgrades are $7.50. Dennis Allen's code was so "clean" that only one line needed to be changed before compiling with Model 4 BASCOM. Our thanks to Donald Schoppe for providing us a compiled version even before the compiler is available at our local Radio Shack Computer Center! Apparantly NJ Radio Shack stores get serviced before MI Shack stores.

=> Is there anyone else using VisiCalc on the Model 4? At least one person has requested the VisiCalc Formula Printer for the 4, and, it is now ready. VCFP provides printouts of all the details in your spreadsheets, with optional commands to "hide" certain parameters. Registered owners can upgrade for $10. Package price for new users is $39.95.

=> How to Write Your Own Computer Bulletin Board is now, finally, in stock for both the Models I and III. Unfortunately, the publisher couldn't fit the entire system on a single diskette. We were surprised by the price increase. List price of the book and software is now $35.50. Nice round number.

=> If you own a microcomputer, sooner or later you will need to connect "RS-232 compatible" equipment. Here is the book to show you how. Nothing in the world of microcomputers is more reviled, despised or misunderstood than the RS-232-C interface. In The RS232 Solution, Joe Campbell describes the various roles of each pin, "handshaking", instructions for building "The Interfacer's Toolkit", a set of inexpensive tools that you can build from cheap parts available at any Radio Shack store, and miscellaneous case studies that will provide insight for your projects. The RS-232 Solution is $16.95.

=> We are now stocking the Legend 880, a very capable Epson-compatible printer at a very reasonable cost. Features include bi-directional printing, 80 cps, 8 X 9 matrix characters, normal dot graphic density of 640 dots (7.5") horizontal and 1280 dots compressed. Paper can be fed both with friction and an adjustable tractor feed, Like the ProWriter, the Legend 880 tractors are "behind" the paper so that a sheet is not wasted every time you need to remove a page. No more room in this UPDATE, so ask for a free spec sheet. Parallel models available from stock, serial available on special order. How much? $279.

Mail all orders and inquiries to: TAS, 704 N. Pennsylvania, Lansing, MI, 48906
Phone Orders (M/C, Visa and COD) may be placed by calling (517) 482-8270

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COD, add $2.00 The Bottom Line: ____.____

What computer models and/or other hardware and software considerations that may affect software performance will you be using with these TAS products?

Please add $3 shipping to your total order for postage and handling expenses.
Thank you for supporting The Alternate Source!