Acorn Customer Services Newsletter

Issue 14
December 1992

Editorial

Welcome to Issue 14 of the Customer Services Newsletter.

With this issue of the Newsletter there is a disc containing all the Field Change Orders (FCOs) which are currently relevant. The disc also contains two Support Group application notes which is a taster of what we will be putting out in future issue of the newsletter. The FCOs and applications notes are supplied in !Edit and RISC OS 3 !Draw and Sprite formats (ie. It is necessary to have RISC OS 3 installed in a machine to read some of the files).

On other important aspect of the disc is the 'NetUtils' module/Application. Details of the problems which 'NetUtils' cures can be found on page 3 of this newsletter and also details for use on the module can be found in the !Help file inside the ! NetUtils directory

A merry Christmas and prosperous new year to you all from Acorn.

Peter Dunn
Acorn Customer Services

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Acorn News

Acorn Support Disc 1

A disc is included with this months issue of the Customer Service Newsletter. The disc contains in electronic (!Draw and !Edit) format the Field Change Orders (FCOs) that have been Issued since 1987. FCO numbers that are missing from the disc have either been superseded by a newer version or were for internal use only.

The disc also contains a new module for RISC OS 3. 10 called 'Netutils'. Further details on the module can be found in the technical information sections of the newsletter.

our intention to issue further discs throughout next year which will contain in electronic form the various application notes that the Support Group has built up over the years for you to pass out to schools and users to help solve their problems.

PC Emulator 1.8 Upgrade

Version 1.8 of the Acorn PC Emulator incorporates support for VGA graphics and Expanded memory (LIM 3.2).

The emulator can be configured to use VGA support, which allows DOS applications that make use of VGA to be run. This includes many of the range of CD ROM titles listed in the NCET CD ROM scheme for schools.

Memory requirements

The memory requirements for version 1.8 (when running without VGA support) are the same as version 1.7.

When configured to use VGA support, some applications may need more than 2MB to run in multitasking mode. Note that some CD ROM titles require 4 Mbytes to run in multitasking mode.

Upgrades

- The upgrade contains the 1.8 PC Emulator and manual only, with no CD ROM extensions or DOS disc; users retain their current DOS disc.

- The price for upgrading from versions 1.6 and 1.7 to 1.8 is £9.00 (ex VAT).

- The price for upgrading from versions earlier than 1.6 is £29.00 (ex VAT).

- The upgrade is available to all existing owners of the PC Emulator, whether originally supplied with MS DOS or DR DOS.

- There is a special upgrade offer for Educational institutions which are using 1.6 or 1. 7. This allows institutions to purchase one unit of the upgrade for £9.00, and copy the disc enough times to replace all their units of 1.6 and 1.7.

Manuals

The PC Emulator 1.8 manual (AKJ35) is available separately at £8.00 (no VAT payable) through Acorns network of dealers.

How to obtain your upgrade

To take advantage of the upgrade offer please send your name and address, your original PC Emulator disc (if you are using 1.6 or 1.7 either the single or multitasking versions) and your payment to:

PC Emulator 1.8
Acorn Direct
13 Denington Road
Wellingborough
Northants
NN8 2RL

Most charge cards, postal orders and cheques made payable to 'Acorn Direct' are accepted. Official orders (accompanied by one disc only) are acceptable from education institutions.

Important note: do not send your MS DOS 0r DR DOS dises back; these do not need t0 be replaced and are not part of the upgrade 0ffer.

Technical Information

NetUtils

Et has become apparent that a problem can occur when using RISC OS 3.10 with networks.

The problem:

If you open and extend a file which is greater than 64K in length, anything beyond 64K in the file will be filled with null's.

The fix:

The module Netutils that is supplied on the enclosed disc with this newsletter should be loaded into every machine on the network, which is using RISC OS 3.10, on startup.

Technical Reference Manuals

Acorn produces a range of Technical Reference manuals for various products, Technical Reference Manuals currently available are:

BBC A3000 Technical Reference Manual (AKJ75)
A5000 Technical Reference Manual (ALJ12) (A5000 TRM is an updated version)

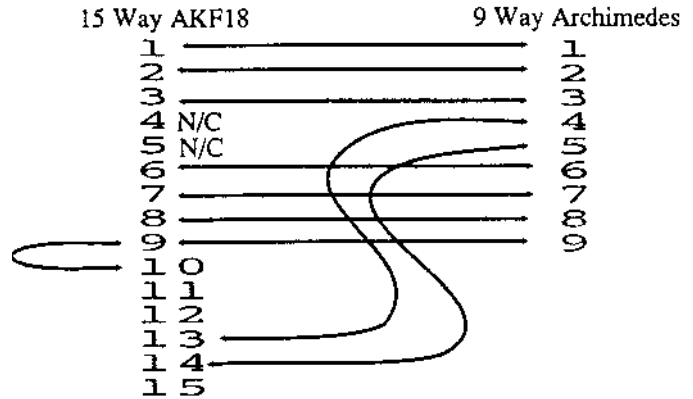Technical reference manuals currently in production include:

A4 Technical Reference Manual
A30x0/A4000 Technical Reference Manual.

The manuals contain details such as circuit descriptions, circuit diagrams, PCB link setting, plug and socket information and component parts lists.

These manuals prove an invaluable source of information within the Acorn Support Department and is definitely a worthwhile purchase for every serious user.

Connecting AKF18s to A3000s / A400/1 series

We have been asked a number of times for details on how to connect the Acorn AKF18 MultiScan monitors to A3000s and A400/1 series machines. The following diagram describes the connector required.
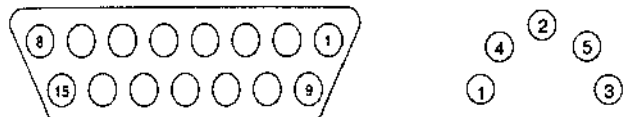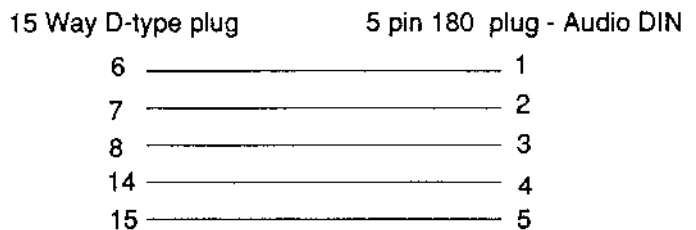

A3020 and A4000 Econet Cable diagram

Due to the positioning of the Econet upgrade in relation to the Mini-podule expansion slot on the A3020 and A4000 it is not possible to use both expansion options simultaneously unless the AEH52 Econet upgrade is used.

Users who need Econet capability and who do not require the use of the Mini-podule expansion slot until a later date, may fit the ADF10 Econet upgrade. The following diagram describes how to wire up the cable to connect an A3020/A4000 to an Econet network.

A3020 / A4000 Econet Cable Connections

NOTE: Connections as viewed from back of connector (solder side).

Service Information

WRA/GRA Applications

When applying for either a WRA or GRA it is essential that full serial numbers for the products are quoted e.g.

01 AKB64 1000001
92 AKB64 1000001

Although the products may be the same they are manufactured at different sites. This will save a lot of time and effort and speed up the turn around time on both WRA's and GRA's.

Power Supply Repair and Refurbishment

Acorn now has an approved site for complete repair and refurbishment of out of warranty power supplies. The company who can carry out the work is:

RW Electronics (Ron Roberts)
PO Box 2
Honiton
Devon
EX14 ONB

Tel. 0404 84648   Fax. 0404 84575

They will complete repair and refurbishment and offer a renewed 6 month warranty on the following PSU's at the rates below. The prices below exclude VAT and carriage.

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Part Code       Computer        Price

PSM-054         A3000           £11-00
HSC51-31        MASTER          £16-00
HSC54-31        A400 Series     £16-00
HVC86R-31       A680            £19.90
PSM-019         A4 Charger      £16.00
HSE200B-30      A5000           £19.90
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RW Electronics will also supply components direct to Dealers and ASCs who they believe are capable of performing their own repairs.

A5000 Serial Port Failures

There has been a higher than average incidence of serial port failure in the A5000 during 1992. This is attributed to a low MTBF on some of the components used. The serial numbers affected are in the range

25-ALB12-1000001 to 1004809 and 25-ALB12-1005500 to 1006575

and Learning Curve variants (ALC10) in the same range.

We are honouring Acorn's quality commitment : In the event that a machine fails, Acorn are prepared to repair boards free of charge, for this fault via the Fastrack system whether in or out of warranty.

Fitting RISC OS 3.10 Upgrades to A3000's

The RISC OS 3 upgrade instructions state that any A300(that has a serial number less than:

01 AKB01 1079467 or
25 AKB01 1010000

should be returned to an Acorn Dealer or Service Centre for the RISC OS 3 upgrade to be fitted.

Our general fitting instructions advise that "if you do no-feel confident to carry out this upgrade, please take the upgrade kit to an Acorn Dealer, who will install it for you.' Some early A3000s were fitted with a shield over the power supply which is perfectly safe and presents nc hazard in normal computer operation. There is, however, a hole in the shield into which a screwdriver could be pokec once the lid of the computer is removed. Owing to a recent change in UK product liability laws we recommend that these computers are upgraded by a qualified engineer. The simple, and perhaps trivial, reason for this recommendation is that a qualified engineer would know to unplug the computer from mains power before removing the computer's top cover, in which case performing the upgrade can be done in total safety. As product liability laws are untested in the UK, we are being ultra cautious and accounting for the possibility that a non-engineer might ignore our instructions and attempt to fit the upgrade with mains power connected.

Fastrack Repair System

A5000, A4000, A3010 and A3020 computers are repaired within warranty through the Fastrack module exchange system. If an A4 or a Pocket Book develops a fault within warranty, Dealers and Authorised Service Centres should apply for Warranty Return Authorisation by fax in the normal way.

Pocket Book Returns - Please Note : All faulty machines should be returned WITHOUT BATTERIES and the data in RAM should be backed up on to either solid state disc or on to an Archimedes via the A-Link before despatch whenever possible.