The PARITY BIT Newsletter

A • N • u • G
The Albuquerque NeXT™ Users Group

First T-Shirt Order Is From Switzerland, The Second From Germany!

T-Shirt Project Update

Buy one at the Jan 11th meeting!

A person from Switzerland inquired about how to buy a T-Shirt outside the US after the advertisement was posted in ASCII to comp.sys.next.announce! There has been other interest, ranging from challenges on content, to approvals and praise. All this and the advertisement hasn't even been posted in rich text yet. No one outside of ANuG knows the exact design yet!

More than one person has asked what exactly the meanings were of the phrases on the back of the shirt, so I wrote two articles to clear things up. (*See"Reasons! What Reasons?" on page 2*) & (*See"Why The Sudden Changes?" on page 2*) The T-Shirt Project has gone into production!

Article continues with "On to Production" on page 3.

Create 1.1

New features!

Andrew Stone continues to tinker! If you thought that Create was set in stone until the release of DataPhile, think again. Release 1.1 of Create is due out sometime soon. Yes, all those who own the 1.0 version are entitled to a full upgrade to 1.1.

Create 1.1 has two main improvements and many bug fixes; Andrew has even fixed the problem of ungrouping a rotated group. Some objects cannot rotate unless they are in a group. Now when that type of group is ungrouped, the elements that can retain rotation will and those which can't won't. The first and most exciting feature is the ability to fit SuperText to any spline curve.

Article continues with "Andrew Continues to Play" on page 5.

The Newsletter Matures

New Newsletter format and volume number to match!

Thanks to the generosity of Frame Inc. and our good fortune, ANuG now has a fully licensed copy of FrameMaker™. It is only fitting that it be used to spruce up the all too bland ANuG Newsletter. To celebrate (and to delineate us from the rest of the mundane newsletters), the ANuG Newsletter of past needs a new name.

Article continues with "The New Parity Bit Newsletter" on page 5.

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The Parity Bit

The Newsletter for the Albuquerque NeXT™ Users Group

Volume 2 Number 1

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ANuG is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping its members informed and involved in the NeXT™ computer community.

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Reasons! What Reasons?

An explanation of the 'Reasons Why NeXT™ is Better'.

I have had more than one person ask what exactly the 'Reasons' on the back of shirt (*seen below*) refer to, most are Steve'isms but some are obscure. If you don't understand some of the jokes, maybe NeXT™ has wanted it that way. At any rate, here are the explanations.

Explanation of The 'Reasons'

• Steve Jobs
I think you understand.

• NeXTStep4.0(What is a File?)
This refers to the drive at NeXT™ to change the fundamental underlying file system structure. Meaning that the concept of a file will somehow change.

• Jayson Adams & NewsGrazer
This, like Mail.app, has expanded the range of what can be communicated without changing the standards.

• It's Not DOS
Again, self explanatory.

• Mail.app
I touched on this earlier, and the simple fact that Steve Jobs loves it is enough.

• Bill Gates is not involved
Gates has been, and will continue to be a force in the computer arena. His force is applied toward profit margin rather than toward a dream.

• Real Time Renderman
There are rumors that there will be a bundled version of Renderman with NeXTStep™ 3.0. Never before has Renderman worked in real time.

• Keith Ohlfs
The person behind the buggy yet great program Icon (soon to be Pixilator), and the general look of the NeXT™ UI.

• !UNIX® && !Xwindows
The !UNIX® means that, even though NeXTStep™ is built on UNIX®, it is the object oriented version of UNIX®, a derivative of the Berkeley version BSD, called Mach. Mach was then modified further to create NeXTStep™.

• N.R.W.
This is another of the more confusing jokes on the shirt. That is not surprising because it is a code word for a secret project at NeXT™.

The NeXT RISC Workstation to be specific (or N.R.W.).

• The UI Police
There is no such specific job at NeXT™ Computer Inc., but if your application is important enough then when you talk with Steve there will be several UI suggestions that NeXT™ would like to see.

• The One Button Two Button Mouse
This refers to a Steve story. Steve and Perot were working out the final version of the NeXT™. Steve wanted one button, but Perot wanted three to conform to more of the UNIX® standards. Perot threatened not to back NeXT™; Steve gave in, but in the design of NeXTStep™ Steve made sure that the second button wasn't necessary.

• Avie Tevanian
One of Mach's main programmers is Avie Tevanian, who came to NeXT™ from CMU after working on Mach's creation there.

I hope that clears things up. Comments are welcome, as usual.

Greg Burd

The World is in a State of Change, and NeXT™ will help to shape it.

Why The Sudden Changes?

An explanation of the new phrase on the front of the T-Shirt

There is a new phrase on the front of the T-Shirt and it too deserves an explanation. The added expense of special colors for the NeXT™ logo (*See "The Expense of Color" on page 3*) caused me to redesign the front.

With the second idea for the front of the shirt I added four skewed square color elements using the same colors as in the logo, and skewed to 28°. This had the effect I wanted concerning the lack of color, but it also changed the look of the shirt so much that the old title circling the logo seemed too much. I tried several different layouts, but none worked. Finally I was watching a summary of the years events on television; A World of Change in '91. Being the NeXT™ junkie that I am this seemed all too appropriate, and with slight modifications I finished the front *(see above right side for final phrase on the front)*.

Greg Burd

The old front.

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On to Production

Continued from "T-Shirt Project Update" on page 1

Thirty-six X-large's will be available at the January 11th meeting, show up early for yours. Some of those thirty-six are slated to go to the persons with their names on the Shirt; the Persons who get free shirts are those who either have their name on the shirt or who have donated important services to the project. Those people are:

- •Keith Ohlfs
- •Andrew Stone
- •Jayson Adams
- •Steve Jobs
- •Susan Mobley
- •Mark Williams
- •Greg Burd

For a complete project summary email me (gburd@nms-u.edu) and I will send you a copy.

Zia Graphics is doing the printing and should have the first set ready by the Jan 11th meeting. An interesting, and one of the most challenging parts of the T-Shirt project was the advertising.

First I had intended to advertise in the AppWrapper, through Conrad Geiger's Users Group Alias, and through comp.sys.next.announce. I had several graphic advertisements, but no plain ASCII advertisement for those who can't get NeXTmail™ and those without NewsGrazer (I personally don't have either of those facilities at my NeXTStation™).

When I first tried to post to Net News (and the reason that there is only an ASCII advertisement out so far) I had to post from Paul Clark's NeXTStation™ where he works. I had no idea that the advertisement that I had worked very hard to condense and make look good would be too large to post because "posting a file that large is impolite because some older servers cannot handle that size file" as NewsGrazer kindly informed me. NewsGrazer is great, but I hope to see a "Be Rude and Post Anyway!" button in the future. Then I tried to post the ASCII version, knowing that it would be small enough, but some how some strange meta-character must have gotten into the text. NewsGrazer crashed without warning and without confirmation of posting. I had no idea if all, none, or part of the ASCII advertisement had gone out. It wasn't until the inquiry from the person in Switzerland that I knew that something had posted. Then the comments came in on the ASCII post (by the way, in one part of the ASCII post, I said that the full color version of the advertisement was on sonata, I couldn't post at that time to sonata either) most were good, all wondered where the post to sonata was. Finally three days later, and after redesigning the advertisement and condensing it to two small pages, I tried to post again with Paul Clark's help, and finally after more revision extending the advertisement over three pages, NewsGrazer and the Net were cooperating and the post went out. Also at that time I placed the advertisement flier (the one page version) on sonata for ftp in the submissions directory. Look for the advertisement on the Net!

Greg Burd

A ◆ N ◆ u ◆ G ◆

The Albuquerque NeXT™ Users Group

Presents:

Reasons NeXT™ is Better

Order Today!

Order form on another page...

(to conserve space)

$20 for a Color Shirt

This Shirt is designed to celebrate the NeXT™ Computer. ANuG is a non-profit organization. All profit from this T-Shirt (about $2.00 per shirt) will go to purchase a group NeXT™ to serve as a ftp site and demonstration machine.

NeXT, the NeXT logo and NeXTstep are trademarks of NeXT Computer, Inc. NeXT trademarks and individual NeXT employee names used with permission of NeXT Computer ,Inc.

The Expense of Color

Why, how, and how much color is costing us.

When it was decided that the T-Shirt was going to be in color several things changed; the first of which was the cost of production. This was expected, but what was not expected was the extra cost of Pantone® colors specific to the NeXT™ logo. It turns out that not only are they non-standard, but they also need to be specially mixed with each printing. This added thirty dollars per color per order, plus the normal expense of extra screens for the colors etc. The initial expense of the screens was small, but the cost of the Pantone® colors is $120 per printing. This is the main reason the T-Shirt is $20 instead of $15. Not only that but the amount of color on the front at that point was minimal, only the NeXT™ logo had any color. The cost benefit of this small amount of color seemed a bad idea, but I wanted to have a color shirt, so I redesigned the front (*See "Why The Sudden Changes?" on page 2*).

Yet another problem associated with the addition of color, was art and registration costs. The NeXT™ logo is something that I could never reproduce accurate enough for professional printing. Instead I had to ask NeXT™ Computer's Trademark department to send me a reproduction quality example of the logo. Now there is the need for a professional artist to prepare the NeXT™ logo in conjunction with my design so that the shirt design is photo ready. This was an additional initial investment of $100, adding to the total initial investment and the number of shirts that must be sold before reaching the break even mark.

This is only a sample of the many contingencies that go with any project of this size. The total number of shirts that need to be sold to break even and start to earn profit towards the group machine is approximately 120. I don't expect this to be a problem.

Greg Burd

The Parity Bit Editorial

BackSpace

To "level the playing field"...

If you don't have it yet don't plan on getting it. BackSpace, the best screensaver and lockscreen utility to come along yet, has been taken off the Network. BackSpace is somewhat similar to NewsGrazer in its origin; they both are written by persons within NeXT computer™, Inc. Unlike NewsGrazer, BackSpace is not a unique and ground breaking application. Instead it was the best answer to a common need for a screensaver on the same lines as After Dark® for the Macintosh™ and DOS™ computers. The reason for its disappearance is to try to keep the software produced by NeXT™ Computer to the unique and otherwise impossible programs, or system level code such as the AppKit™. In this way NeXT™ tries not to step on many programmers toes by giving away what they are trying to program for a living.

The unbundling of WriteNow™ is another example of NeXT™ Computer's attempts to maintain a level playing field. In this case though, the field remains slanted with the creation of AppSoft, a twin star to Claris™. AppSoft™ now controls the fate of WriteNow™, and possibly that of Pixilator™ (Icon's™ future upgrade). This trend may continue with other important programs that NeXT™ Computer feels cause undue grief to the programming community. I don't mean to sound too harsh, but Steve was involved with Apple™ Inc. when Claris™ was born, and Claris™ has yet to prove itself worthy. One would think that Jobs would have learned from his mistakes, but it seems as if he still has a few of his own bugs to work out.

In the specific case of BackSpace; I am not too sure that this was the right program to remove from public circulation. I also program, and applications like screensavers are traditionally the bread and butter of those who choose not to produce large programs. I also purchased several of the pre-BackSpace screensaver programs. Simply put, none of them measured up to being what I would call a 'true' NeXTStep™ program. That is to say that the older screensavers were unimaginative, slow, cumbersome, limited, and boring. BackSpace jumped on the scene and suddenly it was fun to play with your screensaver again. Not only that, but the source code to BackSpace was freely distributed and everybody could learn about the display postscript environment that they were working on as well as have fun. Finally BackSpace challenged every programmer, professional or hobbyist, to make a dynamically loadable module that would wow the children and confuse the dog, or simply serve to educate. Although I appreciate NeXT™ Computer's concern for the programmer, I wish they would push the limits of creativity and ingenuity once in awhile with a program similar in spirit to BackSpace. It will only force the programmers to design better programs.

Greg Burd

***[The views expressed in this column are those of its author and do not represent the views of ANuG or any of its administration, or members.]

Letters to the Editor

Your Two Cents

How do you feel about the Editorial?

In the future I hope to stir up enough interest to have reader responses here. If you have an opinion on the Editorial, the NeXT™ Computer or anything else in the computer industry, email it to gburd@nmsu.edu.

Greg Burd

Rumors & Tid Bits

Psssst! Have You Heard?!

Industry product rumors increase as EXPO draws near.

Well here is a column that you should recognize. Like other issues I try to keep on top of industry trends and the latest and greatest rumors. This month is no exception, and with EXPO just around the corner, the NeXT™ community is busy trying to anticipate the anticipated, but not promised product announcements. Here is what I have heard...

•Jobs will wear our shirt to EXPO! This is fact; Steve Jobs requested an ANuG T-Shirt with the intention to wear it to the EXPO! I guess we all knew that he had good taste!

•Neuron continues to fail in customer support. With the introduction of the 1414+ model of the Neuron fax/modem, no one was notified of its existance. There is an upgrade cost for the older 96+ owners.

•Canon will produce a 3.5" optical read/write floppy drive for NeXT™. With 300+ megs of storage, and 20ms access time; what more could you ask for?

•Canon is also producing the future MegaPixel display, a new technology LCD screen in full color. 17" diagonal same or better resolution, no ghosting or shadowing, and best of all no electromagnetic field to worry about!

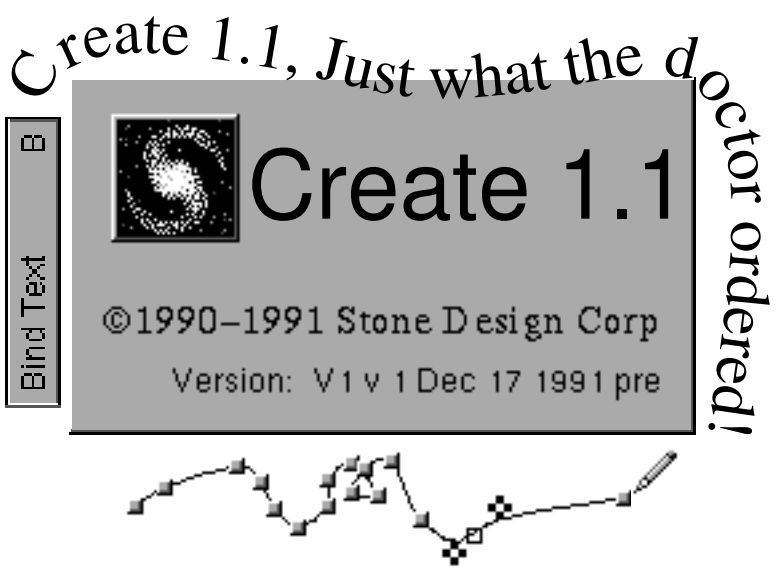
•Canon is also working on producing a 800dpi full color laser printer for the NeXT™. $4,000 is the suspected price.

•Talk continues over the Sun vs. NeXT programming video. C.S.N.misc'ers continue to debate its worthiness.

•C.S.N.announce moderator Pasc (?) continues to thwart ANuG attempts to post a rich version of the T-Shirt advertisement.

That's all the news that is fit to print; even if it is only rumor and speculation.

Greg Burd



Andrew Continues to Play

Continued from "Create 1.1" on page 1

Text no longer needs to be in a circle, or a line but anything you can dream up (SuperText refers to the SuperText tool that allows for graphic manipulation). The other feature is the ability to 'copy' the attributes of one object and 'paste' them to another. This means you can make one object and later in the project have the same attributes in another object. In the past it was either copy the attributes by hand or try to copy the object and then modify it. Neither of which is very elegant. The Parity Bit Header was done using a beta version of Create1.1. The text was placed on a line to correspond to the curve around the sun.

Also any object can now be one of several dotted lines (*as seen above*). He has improved the support of tiff and eps files. Now any tiff or eps file can be skewed with the skew inspector. Also you can lock down a tiff and then trace it. No auto trace tool as yet, but it can't be far behind. Andrew also improved the user postscript window; adding a much needed find button. So don't think that Andrew is going to let his first love, Create, take a back seat and get moldy while DataPhile is finished. Andrew and Stone Design Corporation are dedicated to keeping the software up to date with the features that the user needs. The fact that this is version 1.1 and not 2.0 means all current owners of Create can upgrade without cost. This is the way that all software companies should operate.

Greg Burd

The Need For SIG's

Special Interest Groups are coming!

More than one person has mentioned the need to have Special Interest Groups in ANuG. At this point, I would like to try to start up at least three such divisions. A *Developers SIG*, a *Beginners SIG*, and one to be voted on at the next meeting. The special interest groups would meet for a forty-five minutes after the introduction and the first demonstration.

Greg Burd

The New Parity Bit Newsletter

Continued from "The Newsletter Matures" on page 1

I have given the ANuG Newsletter the new name of **The Parity Bit**. *A parity bit is defined as a check bit appended to a unit of data to make the sum of the total bits even or odd* Webster's New World Dictionary of Computer Terms This seems appropriate, but I am still open to suggestions about format, content, name, graphics, etc. A few ideas I also have are: The Bit Bucket, /Dev/Nul, A Bit Of News, Our Two Bits, and The Swap File, please email me any and all suggestions you may have. There is also the need for articles and help in producing. The Bit (the nick-name for The Parity Bit) has also been delineated from the earlier ANuG Newsletter by a new volume number of which this is the first issue. Again if there is anyone who would like to help with the production, writing (I'm sure you are getting tired of my endless rambling ;-) or any part of the Bit, email me. One final note, watch the sunset in the header, after it sets there will be a night scene (look for constellations in the stars).

Greg Burd

Here is the future header back ground. Sun has set behind the horizon of the times.

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