In from the cold

Users of lesser-known WP software make themselves known, and Tim Nott is here to greet them. He also grapples with Greek characters and turns his attention to Tables in Word.

John Coryn was one of the many readers who responded to my challenge to users of minority word processing software, to stand up and be counted *(PCW March)*. He uses Protext 6.5, and has produced "more letters than I can count, plus one reasonable-sized book. I want to buy a further copy for an old friend, but Arnor, who produced Protext, seems to have moved, been bought out or to have given up." The bad news is that Arnor closed in May 1995, but the good news is that Protext goes on. Version 6.7 is available from Protext Software (see *"PCW Contacts", p280)*.

And another one: this time it's a LocoScript problem from Sandra Tuppen. "I have a number of LocoScript files (created on an Amstrad 9512) which I would like to convert to Word for Windows. The files are saved on standard 3.5in floppy disks."

The problem here is twofold. First, the floppy disk format of the Amstrad 9512 isn't the same as a PC. Second is the problem of the file format: Word doesn't come with LocoScript converters. If you still have the 9512 machine to hand, then you can solve both problems by linking the two machines with a serial cable, converting the files to a Word-readable format (which may well have to be plain text) at the 9512 end, and using a comms program to transfer the files. If you don't, then you can get the disks converted. The LocoScript people themselves will do this, for £5 per disk: contact Softco *(see "PCW Contacts", p280)*. Other firms advertise similar services from time

to time in *PCW*, so you may be able to hunt down a better price.

Finally, if you have both PC and 9512 to hand, each with its own version of LocoScript, Softco can provide the cable and software to transfer the files fully formatted. You can then export from LocoScript (PC) to a format, such as WordPerfect 5, that Word can read.
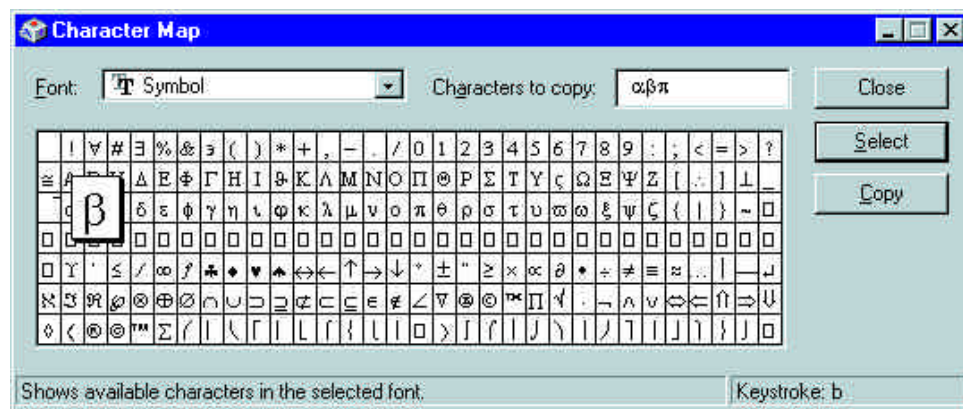
Pi in the sky

Frank Dowson has a rather symbolic problem. He constructs school timetables using a program called GP-Untis. He says: "I have come up against the problem of using the symbols for alpha, beta and pi. I cannot find a font which looks good in the normal sense and also allows me to type in these Greek characters directly or by using the Alt + numeric keypad codes."

Frank is working in Windows 3.1, but Win95 users face the same obstacle. The problem is that the character set of the standard typefaces such as Times or Arial do not contain these characters. The Symbol font, which does, doesn't contain the normal alphabet.

Find that symbol with the Windows Character Map

If you want to use one font for all, then you can buy a font (or hopefully get it bundled with a word processor) such as Monotype Greek, which replaces the usual accented characters with Greek characters. But then you're limited to a single typeface, and rather stuck if Française or Español figure in the curriculum. Otherwise, you have to change the font to Symbol, insert the character (α, β and π map to a, b and p, but there are "lonely heart" matches such as θ for q) then change back to the original font.

Most word processors can do this automatically. You can assign a keystroke to produce a "one-off" symbol from any font. Less endowed applications, such as Write or Wordpad (and presumably GP-Untis) don't have this capability so you'll have to do it manually.

The Windows Character Map lets you find characters. Choose the target font "Symbol", for instance, from the drop-down list and select the character. They are rather difficult to distinguish but clicking on one gives a magnified view. You will also see the keyboard assignment, if it exists. Clicking
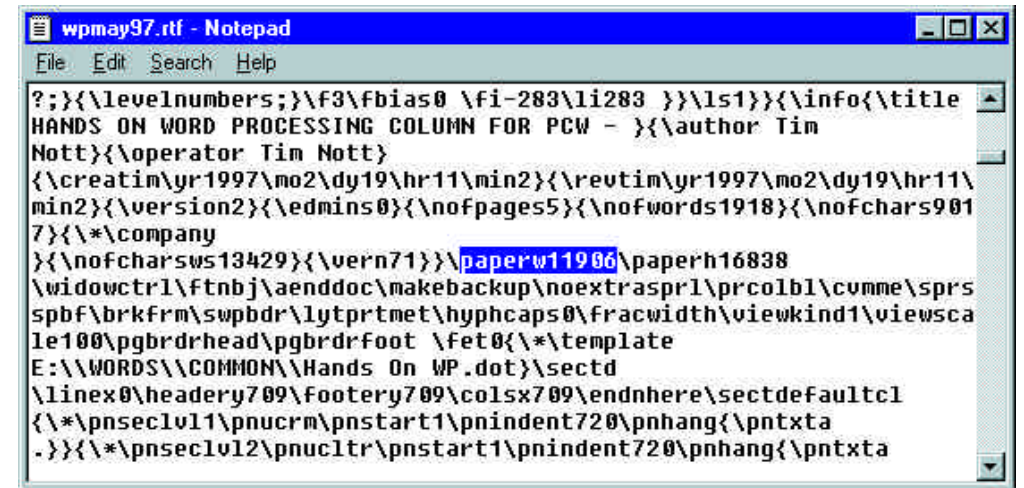
the "Select" button (or double-clicking the character) stores it for copying. You can store several characters if, for example, you want an entire Greek word. The "copy" button places the lot onto the clipboard, from where they can be pasted into applications in the usual way. Note that in Windows 3.1 you'll still have to change the font in the application to match. In Windows 95, it changes to the symbol font automatically (at least, with WordPad) but it doesn't change back, which is a παιν ιν τηε αρσε if you carry on blithely typing.

Finally, if you're using Windows 3.1 you might like to try getting the Windows Recorder to automate the process. We don't have space here to go into the nitty-gritty, but here are the basics:
● Just have the application and Recorder open, then in the latter, "Macro Record".
● Set mouse clicks to "Ignore", set "Playback" to "Same application" and "Fast"
● Set a shortcut key, then hit the start button: Recorder will minimise.

This column shows off its RTF codes

● Record the macro in by using the keyboard to change fonts, type the symbol and change back.
● Stop recording and save the macro.
It's a file, Jim, but not as we know it.

My brother's keeper

"I have an application, Brother's Keeper Genealogy, which creates text and RTF files for different purposes," writes Jim Mann-Taylor. "My MS Word Version 7, like most in the world outside the US, is set to default to an A4 page setup. Having created the file,

Brother's Keeper then opens it in MS Word. For some inexplicable reason, the text files open correctly in A4, but the RTF files open Word in that insular 'Letter 8Ω x 11', and with odd margins. Somewhere there must be a deeper default which would enable these RTF files to open Word in A4 format, but where do I find it?"

This one's easy, but not very encouraging. Text files are just that: they contain no formatting apart from carriage returns and tabs. RTF (Rich Text Format) files, like text files, are 7-bit ASCII but they can contain formatting codes, which are delimited by backslashes and curly brackets. For example, \b turns on bold and \fs24 sets font size to 12 points (it counts in half-point steps). If you open an RTF file in Notepad you'll see the codes. If you open it in Word, it will interpret the codes. Somewhere amidst all the slashes and curls will be a code containing the page size: \paperw12242\paperh15842 is US Letter, while A4 is \paperw11906\paperh16838.

Just as with a .DOC file, Word will preserve the formatting (including the original paper size) when opening the file. You can get around this by creating a new, blank document in your default page size, then "Insert/File…" rather than opening it directly. And I'm sure you're all dying to know how RTF distinguishes a control code from a backslash or curly bracket that occurs in the text. Well, it puts another backslash in front of them to denote "literal backslash". Believe me, it works.
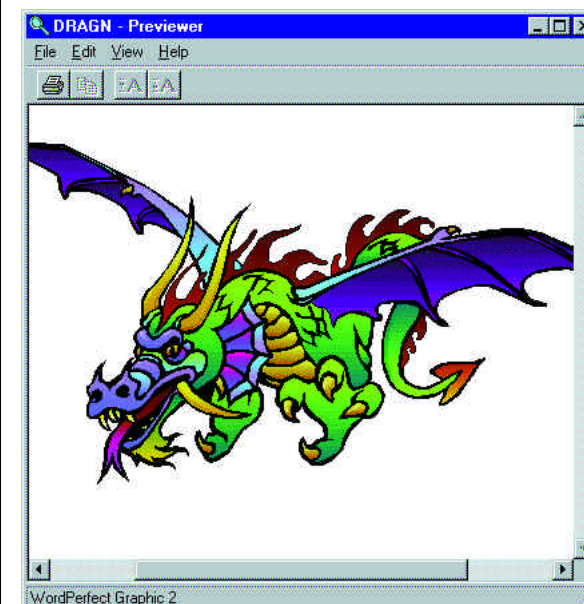
Droopy draw

Tim Parkinson wanted help in starting MS Draw in Word 7.0: "I want to create a .GIF to add to a web site and can do it easily in Draw, but I'm having real trouble getting my
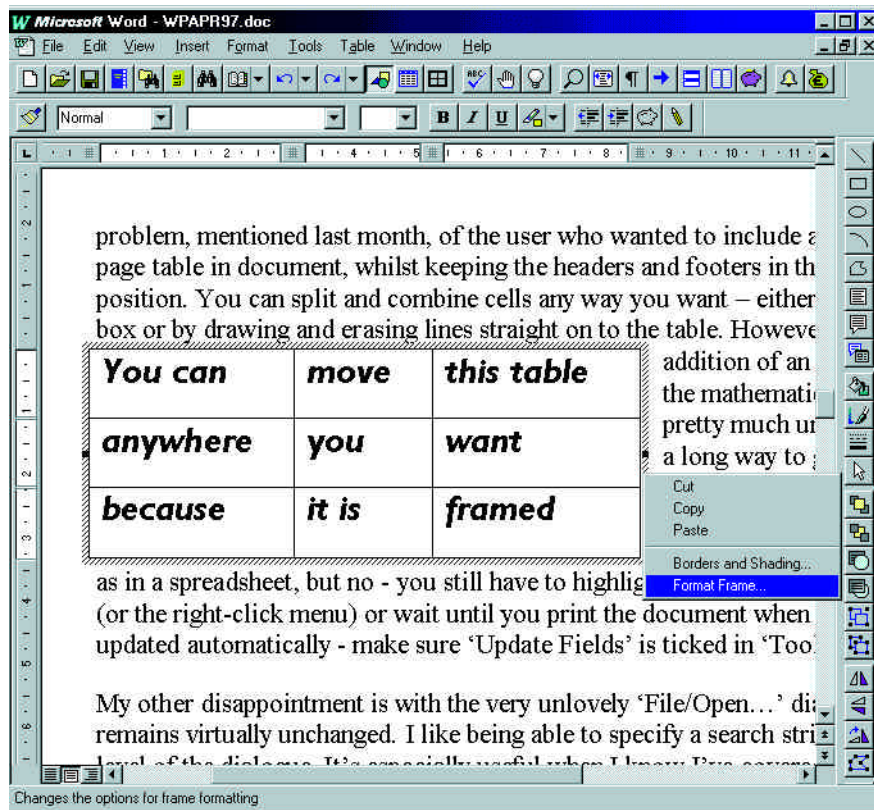

A better view

Here's something I've only just discovered. If you set the Word 7 "File/Open" dialogue to "Preview" mode and file type to "All files", it will additionally display any graphics for which Word has import filters installed. The Word 6 "Find File" feature has a similar capability, as does WordPerfect 7.

Reader Paul le Gassick has an additional WordPerfect 7 previewing tip: "For a better (and in my experience, faster) preview while in the 'File, Open' dialogue, go to the 'View, Preview' menu item and tick 'Use separate window'. This gives a preview in a larger window, just like WordPerfect 6.0."

WordPerfect's free-range preview window handles graphics, too

Framing Word tables makes life much easier

new computer to want to play. It will edit Draw documents which I import but won't start Draw itself."

I'm rather confused here. The way to start MS Draw is from the "Insert/Object…" command. Find "Microsoft Drawing" in the list and the Draw applet will start. It hasn't seen an update since pre-OLE2 days, so it will appear in a separate window. As an OLE server it can only be started from another Windows program and you can't save a Draw file as an independent entity, so I'm wondering where he's getting these "Draw documents" from. In any case, it's a truly awful piece of kit. The built-in drawing tools in Word 7 and 6 are far better, and those in Word 97 are drool-making. Also it won't create .GIFs; for that you'd be better off with a shareware image editor such as PaintShop Pro.

Table tennis
Matt Baker has been trying to centre a Word table on the page. "If I select the whole table then move the left-most vertical line, the table squashes up. I am at a loss," he writes. "When it comes to tables, bring back Ami Pro."

Quite. As I've remarked before, Word 6 and 7 are definitely the poor relations when it comes to tabling. You have to set the left and right margins independently, then jiggle around with the internal divisions. If you decide you want to move the whole table — well, then you're back where you started. There has to be a better way, and there is, although you'd go mad trying to find it.

But try this wonderfully intuitive procedure. Click in the table. From the "Table" menu, choose "Select table". Go to the "Insert" menu and choose "Frame". I, too, was under the misapprehension that "Insert x" means "put x inside" but Microsoft takes the Humpty Dumpty approach in that words mean what you want them to mean. In this case, it actually means "Insert the table into a frame". Once this has been done, you can drag it anywhere on the page, and even wrap other text around it.

Incredibly useful little macro

I don't know how you organise your work, but I like to do it by project. A feature I'm writing will often involve one or more .DOCs, a text file or two, several graphic files and maybe one or more spreadsheets. Rather than keep each file type in a folder "belonging" to the parent application — documents with Word, screenshots with PaintShop, and so on — everything goes in a sub-folder of my "Words" folder; for instance, "Words\PCW\DTP97" for a DTP group test project. That way, not only is it all together for easy access, but I can back up the whole project with one drag. And as I keep such items as templates, and address books in sub-folders of "Words", it makes it extremely simple to back up nearly all that is precious.

Usually, when starting a project, I stick a shortcut to the folder on the desktop, but one day it struck me that it would be useful to put a shortcut to the folder in the document: then I could have instant, in-place access to all the graphic and other files. Well, you can't create a shortcut to a folder in a document, but what you can do is even better. Try this macro:

```
Sub MAIN
Shell "explorer " + FileNameInfo$(FileName$(), 5)
End Sub
```

Note that it won't work without the space before the closing quotes.

For those of you battling on the frontlines of Word 97 and Visual Basic for Applications, the VBA code is:

```
Public Sub MAIN()
Dim retval
retval = Shell("explorer.exe " & ActiveDocument.Path, vbNormalFocus)
End Sub
```

Again, the space is important. In either case, running the macro opens the folder containing the current document. Switch documents, re-run the macro, and if the new document is in a different folder, that one will open. Cool, or what? Stick it on your button bar — you know it makes sense.

Of course, none of this is much use to those working with Windows 3.1, but you can start File Manager from a macro with the line:

```
Shell "winfile.exe"
```

You cannot, however, specify a directory.