

oftware Availability Revisited

Last month's column on software availability earned me a lot of email. I'd like to thank those who took the time to write. I really do appreciate it. I learn quite a bit from the letters that people send me, and I encourage you to continue to do so. My email address is listed above, so send me (almost) anything, anytime.

I'm happy to say that with one exception, they were all nice, friendly letters, even when the writers disagreed with me. The other

guy, however, really worked me over. He said all sorts of nasty things about my limited experience, my low IQ, and even talked dirty about my mom. Who'd have guessed it? I mean, after all, I thought Dad would have found something to do besides harass me now that he's retired. I'm grown up now Dad, leave me alone! Oh well...

A number of people wrote me to point out a shortage of voice recognition software for the Mac. Voice recognition (VR, but not Virtual Reality) software, eh? I pondered that for a while. I work at a place with around 10,000 desktop computers, almost all of the Wintel variety. Guess what? I've never seen anyone using VR software, anywhere, at any time.

I wrote back to all but one of these folks and asked them some questions about VR software. My questions went along these lines — "Can any VR software allow me to issue directives to my computer while I'm driving down the road in a 1970 426 Hemi Dodge Challenger with headers and glass packs while listening to Rick Derringer's 'Rock 'N Roll Hoochie Koo?'" No? Then I can't use it.

In fact, can you use it in an open office space? Really, think about it. Imagine all 200 people on my floor at work breaking into a spontaneous fit

of narration. Wouldn't that be amusing? Or pretend for a second that the lady in the neighboring cubicle is an intern having "an illicit affair" on the phone with some VP. What would your VR make of that? I'd like to see that transcript! Yee ha, buddy!

I had a number of interesting email exchanges on this topic. One gentleman was good enough to point out to me that for those with physical limitations which made keyboarding difficult, VR is a real boon. He also said that his daughter used Dragon Software's Power Secretary, despite its difficulties, for some of her class work.

I'm sure that VR is an essential component of computing's future.

I'm equally as certain that Apple figured that out long before I did or

even (gasp) before you did. I'd be absolutely stunned if they aren't pushing the VR envelope from the operating systems side. I feel safe predicting that these advances will manifest themselves in ways we haven't even thought of yet.

I'd be more stunned if VR didn't become an integral part of application software as it becomes more mainstream and usable.

ou CAD!

A few people wrote me to say that there was a dearth of good Computer Aided Design (CAD) software for the Mac. I freely confess that I use CAD software as often as I do voice recognition software. That is, never — just like 99.9% of you faithful readers.

Nevertheless, out of curiosity I thumbed through the 84-page Mac Mall "Software Buyers Guide" that just so happened to be in front of me. (I was doing the perpetual wish list thing, where I circle all the software I want that the wife/treasurer will never let me procure.) I stumbled across an entry titled "MiniCAD 7" by some company named Diehl Graphsoft Inc.

Being of roughly average intelligence, I searched the Web for "MiniCAD 7." Up popped the first 10 hits. One of them led me to this:

[MiniCAD 7: Winner of the 2nd Annual Architectural CAD Cup as "BEST OVERALL ARCHITECTURAL CADD SOFTWARE" — Designers 3D CADD Shootout, Build Boston, Nov. 97.](#)

In case you don't believe me, head on over to <http://www.diehlgraphsoft.com/products/MiniCAD/shootout/shootout.html> and look for yourself.

Now, I don't know CAD from a cad (take that, you cad), but I do recognize the words "BEST OVERALL ARCHITECTURAL CADD SOFTWARE" as meaning, roughly, really good stuff!

Confused by these conflicting opinions, I really didn't know what to think. Anyway, I mentioned this to a lady (a highly paid defense contractor). I know that she worked with a CAD program to design her own home. She told me she had bought one of the emulation software packages (don't remember which) to run some cheap Wintel CAD program on her Performa 6360. Why that, I asked her? Is there no CAD software for the Mac?

She told me that there are plenty of choice of CAD software for a Mac, it was just that before she reformed her husband, he owned a PC. Said husband had some cheap CAD software for the PC and, as crummy as it was, it was suitable for their needs. With a baby en route, they did a quick economic analysis and determined that it was mucho cheaper to use hubby's cheap PC CAD package and buy the emulation software than it was to buy the more expensive (but better, she said) Mac CAD software.

In the meantime, the lady sitting next to her, a lady who just so happens to be the CEO of a data company also under contract to us, was turning blue from oxygen deprivation, she was laughing so hard. She owns a number of Apple and Mac compatible computers as well as PCs. Luckily, she recovered before I had to administer CPR (sexual harassment laws being what they are nowadays).

But, again, I'm no CAD guy. I'm not even a cad, since I've matured (I don't care what the wife says).

oolkit Wanted

Another gentleman mentioned "Investor's Toolkit" by InvestWare "for performing analysis of stocks according to a particular methodology, the method propounded by the National Association of Investors Corporation." He swears that

The method has a long history making people a lot of money. EasyWare has updated the Wintel version to v3.1. They abandoned the Macintosh at version 2.5. There is no program as good as Toolkit 3.1. Anywhere. I've looked.

Heck, I believe him. I certainly can't dispute this. I own no stocks. I don't gamble. I went around the world as a Marine and contracted no sexually transmitted diseases. I figure that I've used up all of my luck. If anybody can help this gentleman, who seems to have gambling money to burn, please pass your investment software suggestions along and I'll send them on to him.

HC! - Excuse Me, I Had a Hairball

One last tale, then it's nighty night for you. Another fellow tells me that there is simply no "PHC" software (which translates to "plumbing, heating, and cooling").

If the charge is ignorance, I plead guilty as heck. I asked, "What're ya doing, putting in a septic tank?" No way, this fine gent assures me.

What he's doing is calculating

"the heating and cooling load of a given building" and producing "a sizing and material list." [I design] "the systems after viewing the blueprints or visiting a existing structure and measuring up the place, noting the R-values of insulation, type windows, doors, etc., and designing for a design day or "worse case" day. Such as -10°F for heating +100 for cooling and relating that to a temperature one would want inside that building under those conditions."

Guess what. He can't find a Mac solution, so he uses emulation. He says he hates it. I asked him "Why do you hate it? Is it too slow, too buggy?" He says that

"I have no complaint about the speed of the emulator programs: SoftWindows and RealPC are what I use. I use a 6100 upgraded to a G3 processor, and a Power Computing 604e machine with tolerable speed. I guess I just hate DOS and klunky way the programs are written. Its really like the dark ages when one is used to the Mac and its programs."

And I say "Hallelujah, brothers and sisters!"

I exited these various email exchanges convinced, more than ever, that for 99.9% of us there exists all the software you'll ever need. And for that 0.01%, you can probably get away with using Virtual PC or one of the other fine emulation packages, especially considering how fast Macs are these days.

Thanks for the cards and letters. Dad, take Mom out and leave me alone!

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