LISTENING TO YOU, AND VICE VERSA (Editorial)

Most of you help MMS to develop better products, and we pay attention to your comments. As a software developer and publisher, MMS has thousands of customers/users and hundreds of hourly clients. We offer a wide variety of "standard" applications programs, a remarkably flexible development environment, and the resources to develop custom software for an unwinding parade of special needs. The combination of this variety, the MMSFORTH User Groups, and our own interest in our products also generates an unusually high volume of user feedback to keep us on our toes and to generate improvements each time we rework a MMSFORTH program or manual.

Whenever our workload permits, we like to answer each comment with solutions to any questions posed. But sometimes we don't have the time. Some letters and calls arrive here without proper or legible identification (envelopes often become separated from the text). Some messages are confusing, or unrealistically detailed, (MMS sells its consulting services,) if the purpose of your comment is to elicit a specific reply, we strongly recommend that you call MMS first; don't write, in general, understanding letters and generating replies is prohibitively time-consuming; letters are at least three times less effective than live phone calls to MMS! Either way, please understand that our technical people have limited time, and that it may not be available when you first call. Our support is offered on an as-available basis between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m., which is far better than most.

Your suggestions for future product design will definitely be considered. However, all the complaints and suggestions involved in any real application program preclude many apparently positive suggestions from gracefully coexisting with other valued features, or with the space and speed constraints of the program. In other words, nothing has to give it may be the very suggestion which we solicited.

This frustrating fact of life suggests to some of our less forgiving users that we don't care, or that we are stupid. We notice that their complaints usually mention their own high level of capability, but that it is in some other field. One such argument might run, "If my $5,000 laser transfection equipment is deployable, why can't you folks handle all error conditions in your much simpler (i.e., less costly) software?" Part of the reason is that MMSFORTH is much more complex than a program to do one specific job with one set of hardware, and another part is that MMS didn't charge $5,000 to do a more thorough (but still incomplete) study of all possible combinations within the computer, as well as with many independent disk drives, printers, etc. Excessive error conditions of the type you mention are system performance if lavished on every imaginable but non-critical concern.

Professional programmers are more apt to understand these trade-offs, but some cannot understand our software pricing and/or licensing agreement. This is another area where someone else Offsets, paid the programmers' daily keep without requiring them to understand the details. Thus, the programmer who casually uses mainframe utilities may not see either the tremendous investment which produced the software or even his own cost's large fees. For instance, a simple sale, get it free, to the greater expense of commercial users). But the software licensing he takes for granted is expensive for his employer, and at least as constraining. Until MMSFORTH becomes very popular, MMS must efficiently recover from the real user base the cost of maintaining it in top-notch form. Our licensing and pricing are set up as a modest level of control to assure these ends.

These examples are typical of the unhappy communications we occasionally receive. We are grateful for the far larger number which include praise, and we appreciate the fact of the compliment and accurate. The licensing for MMSFORTH is more awkward than for most common microcomputer products, but this permits us to market a very complex package with reduced pricing for personal users and still at low cost for professional shops. Neither group has to suffer the limited-backup protection built into many microcomputer programs.

However attractive the bargain, not everyone has spare money. But we are sometimes bemused by the "hobbyist mentality" in the office. Consider the manager who decides that an additional $1,000 software cost is prohibitively expensive. Balanced against the likelihood of significantly increased efficiency on his inventory of perhaps $50,000 of personal computers and $300,000 per year overhead of professional users, he should be begging for more of our kind of products, MMS or a professional MMSFORTH user could be saving his company still more money through a sensible schedule of custom installation and user training, but instead he will "economize" while his computers work in low gear, if at all all!

MMS will continue to solicit new ideas. We will continue to offer early fixes where appropriate and possible, to consider better products for all users in the future, and to share your more special solutions

NEW AT MMS

MMSFORTH VERSION 2.2 GETS SUPPORT FOR DAVOG & CORVUS DRIVES, IBM XT & COMPAQ COMPUTERS

More features have been added to MMSFORTH V2.2, presently in beta testing. And please be aware that future features include support for the Davog and Corvus hard disk drives, and modification to match to the new IBM XT (with hard disk) and the COMPAQ portable computer. Selling price of the improved V2.2 system is expected to remain the same as V2.1.

Here's some early information on the controversial new COMPAQ "IBM-compatible" computer. At MMS, we like it but think the word compatible is apt to be misunderstood. Most so-called compatibles cannot even boot the MMSFORTH diskette. But V2.2 now runs everything up to and including hard disk drives. All our standard applications run fine, too. But the systems are not identical. The COMPAQ displays a non-standard mix of "IBM monochrome" fine characters with the high-resolution graphics screen (very rare), but its RGB color output jpeg cannot display the MMSFORTH low-resolution graphics set (for example, our RSCAPE demo program). And the COMPAQ's disk drives don't meet the tolerances of the Tandon drives used on early IBM PC's. We have had to adjust our display and BIOS to conform to the MMSFORTH version. The M3 disk format is not reliably accommodated by it or the IBM's. Just a few more reasons for professional users to come to MMS for consulting assistance when it's time for system selection.

V2.2's DISKDATA were initially expanded from 8 or 10 bytes to 14 each, and now each of the eight possible drive sides gets a full 16 bytes to accommodate a flexible formatting capability and to let you format the drives. The new interface to the Davog hard disk drive has a very fast data transfer rate: 90 Kbytes per second, which is far faster than the Davog/PC/CDOS version. Our Corvus hard disk drive interface has a faster track to track access but cannot support as high a transfer rate, and the IBM XT falls in between. As we create other hard disk drives on client request, they will become available for other users.

Work also proceeds on the transfer of MMSFORTH V2.2 to the TRS-80 model I, II, and III. Work on V2.2 draft copies will continue to be available for our IBM PC and COMPAQ users, but final release of V2.2 will be delayed in order to ensure maximum compatibility between all versions.

DATAHANDLER-PLUS GETTING MORE FEATURES

Like MMSFORTH V2.2, the release of DATAHANDLER-PLUS has also been postponed for the addition of major new features. We're adding more disk drive support, powerful printing and display generation features, which in turn will delay completion of some of the other routines. Draft versions are available for the IBM PC and COMPAQ computers, and last issue's DATAHANDLER trade-in discount will be extended to one month after we announce availability of the final product.

FORTICOM HANDLES FILES:

Our FORTICOM communications program has benefited from some recent modifications. It now can transfer data to and from "foreign" computers through their disk operating system's file systems, and can identify data locally by FORTH blocks as before. Like MMSFORTH, MMSFORTH-style file names when used in conjunction with FORTICOM, FORTICOM, the DATANANDLER, etc. Menu adjustments are now available for such high-speed transmission settings as character and end of line delays, line editing, screen and data display and printer spooling; the present PC version (running on MMSFORTH V2.1) does not, but an upcoming version for MMSFORTH V2.2 will, FORTICOM still costs $38.00, Licensed users can upgrade their present FORTICOM diskette for $10.00 plus shipping/handling.

-- A. Richard Miller, Editor 4th Class
INDEX OF ARTICLES, MMSFORTH NEWSLETTER VOLUME II

Here it is, the second volume of articles from this exciting and continuing series. Like the first volume, MMS also will provide it in file form on all new DATADAPTER and DATADAPTER-PLUS diskettes, and grants you permission to share it with other licensed users of those programs. Codes used include Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Datataker, Games, General Ledger, Utilities, forthwrite, Porth Training, Interoperability, Modifications, New products, and Others. This Index was created in DATALYNX-PLUS, its REPORT command was used to "print to disk" as a FORTHWRITE-readable file, and then we edited it with FORTHWRITE to adjust it for the proportional printout which follows.

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FORTWRITE ADDS CENTRONICS 737 AND NEC 3550 ("IBM") PRINTER-DRIVERS

FORTWRITE, the MMSFORTH word processor, has just received an additional custom RS/10 (proportional and constant pitch) printer-driver for the popular Centronics 737 printer. It also should be compatible with the Centronics 739 and we will appreciate user feedback in this regard. The 737 driver comes on all new FORTWRITE diskettes, but the IBM version (with which it is compatible but would be rarely used) does not list it as a FORTPRINT Menu "Set" option. Similarly, a driver for the NEC 3550 ("IBM-compatible") printer exists on all recent versions, but the TRS-80 versions do not list it as a FORTPRINT Menu "Set" option. Either can be found in the printer-drivers section of the source disks, and you may USE COPIES to substitute it for a superfluous driver option. You are invited to update your original FORTWRITE source disks for $10.00 plus $2.00 shipping/handling.

GENERAL LEDGER

Is now running on IBM PC and COMPaq computers, as well as the earlier TRS-80 Models I and III. MMS also can provide a MMSFORTH-expert accountant to introduce your company or your company's accountant to this very high-performance General Ledger system. He observes and advises our other customers beginning to apply it, in parallel at their own and their clients' offices, for more efficient handling of an increased volume of client accounts.

MMSFORTH MODIFICATIONS

SPINARTER 5530 PRINTER BUG AFFECTS FORTWRITE

MMS has tracked a FORTWRITE bug report to a previously undocumented board-logic problem in many NEC 5530 printers (the fast, "Centronics-parallel" predecessor to the 7390). If appropriate, your NEC field service engineer can provide a free replacement PROM chip which corrects the problem. And MMS has a patch to relieve the pain until it arrives.

Symptom of the bug is a very occasional misprinting under FORTWRITE's Spinwriter RS/10 printer-driver, with lineseed preceding the carriage return so the first letter of a new paragraph, for example, might appear at the right side of the new line, under the end of the prior sentence, with the rest of its paragraph starting at its left and overtyping it. The bug at first appears to be random; however, it will repeat if the unchanged document is reprinted, and deleting any character from the prior line will "correct" it.

FORTWRITE can be patched to override this problem, but only by inhibiting its vertical-centering feature. This has been done on many copies shipped from MMS before NEC could offer the better solution. The patch is in Block 1 of the NEC Spinwriter printer-driver, typically on Block 97 of Source Disk #2. Insert 9 ZEMIT in Line 13, so it now reads:

13:0 PRINTLINE ( cm - - ) BL TO _CZ EzPSPACE 9 ZEMIT _C TO _CZ

Note that many of our present FORTWRITE disks have this patch, at our cost of vertical-centering feature (VC-1). If you do not require this patch, carefully move the _CZ from the right end of Line 13 to the beginning of Line 14 to make room, then to the end of the offending 9 ZEMIT in Line 13.

If you find that the patch removes the error, you are a candidate for the replacement chip from NEC. Contact your NEC Field Service regional office, and say that you own a NEC 5530 Printer and its CB/80 Board's Z8 PROM appears to need an upgrade to Revision 7 or later. (The board is second from the back, and the chip in position 26 will have a Revision Code mark of a circle for Rev. 6, circle and dot for Rev. 5, and 2 dots for Rev. 7, etc.) NEC may swap the whole board or the single PROM chip. Once the update is done, you can remove the 9 ZEMIT patch in your Spinwriter printer-driver to restore vertical centering.

INSIDE TRACK (for intermediate users)

PERIMETRAL TALK

EASY FIX FOR AST RESEARCH'S MEGAPLUS LARGE-RAM BOARD

If you equipped your IBM PC with the new Megaplush combination board from AST Research and your printer suddenly slows to first gear, don't despair. A MMS bug report has been traced to a design error on that board; the manufacturer says new production will be corrected, and it's a simple fix on the current boards as well.

This extended-memory board also offers a variety of add-on options, including a parallel port which is the source of the trouble. The board's circuitry permanently enables that optional port (Pin 3 of Chip set 1973 to 1974); when the option is not present, Interrupt processing via your existing parallel port (for instance, by FORTWRITE's Spinwriter RS/10 driver) becomes very useful. For a very easy and inexpensive solution, cut a strip of Scotch tape over Pin 821 (Interrupt Request 7) on the Megaplush board edge. If you do not plan to use the optional parallel port later, we recommend cutting its trace at Position 1R4, instead.

NEW LICENSE TRANSFER OPTION

We've always offered inexpensive MMSFORTH upgrades while you are on the same computer, and in case site licensing lets users come and go within a licensed building, but MMSFORTH personal licenses have been nontransferable. Have you moved to another computer, and want to exchange your MMSFORTH as well? Or would you rather pass the same version on to a friend or to the purchaser of your old computer, now that you are done with it? On a trial basis, MMS proposes to offer a new method for transferring MMSFORTH personal license agreements.

Here's how it will work. At least 12 months after purchase or most recent transfer, the complete system of MMSFORTH products under your personal license may be returned to MMS for resale, under new serial numbers and license agreements, to another person using the same type of computer, or to yourself for another appropriate type of computer. You as "source user" must get a transfer agreement from MMS, then return it to MMS with the original license agreement(s), also warranting that no copies of any of the licensed software or documentation have been distributed elsewhere and that all remaining disks which held any of the licensed software and documentation have been conveyed to MMS or erased. MMS will recycle the MMS binder(s) and diskette(s), updated to the current version(s), to the destination user you identify.

The intent is to offer one more level of support to qualified users who have no more use for a specific MMSFORTH system, while maintaining licensing protection for users and for MMS. The transfer price is designed to offer an incentive to continue using while reimbursing MMS for the new license. In general, the transfer charge for each licensed item of software will be either 50% of its new list price plus 100% of the difference between old and new list prices, or 80% of the new list price; whichever is less. Also, you must provide shipping/handling cost and shipping address for the transfer. The approximate example: you want to transfer your MMSFORTH V1.2, which sold for $60 list, to another TRS-80 Model 1 owner, and currently V2.0 sells for $130. You also own a UTILITIES diskette (six 440) and THE DATAMANAGER (six 600). The MMSFORTH transfer will cost the lesser of $15 or $104, the UTILITIES $20 or $32, and THE DATAMANAGER $30 or $48. Choosing the least expensive for each, your entire system can be transferred for $154 (plus S/H), compared to the new list price of $320: a savings of 33%.

In summary, if you are moving to another computer or must bid your MMSFORTH system goodbye, you are invited to contact MMS for a personal license transfer form to keep your MMSFORTH system in action.
THREE NEW BOOKS, PLUS ONE PRICE INCREASE:

FORTH PROGRAMMING, by Leo Selsdon  $15.95
AND SO FORTH, by Timothy Huang  $25.00
STARTING FORTH, by Leo Brodie  $17.95

Many of our users will find the three new offerings good. Note that STARTING FORTH — still our favorite — has gone up in price to $17.95 in softcover and $21.95 in hardcover. Please don’t blame us, because we didn’t do it! All these books are in stock at MMS.

FORTH PROGRAMMING does a good job of explaining Forth, and does more than most to explain the differences between figFORTH and 79-Standard Forth. If you only use MMSFORTH you will value only the latter, but if you also use a figFORTH version on some other project you may appreciate the comparison. The book also promises over 50 programs with source code. But not for you, Too many of them fall within the wealth of additional programming MMSFORTH includes anyway. Because we give so much more than the typical figFORTH, these examples offer little for our users. We don’t claim to be experts with figFORTH (and some of our users tell us that’s just as well), but we do know the 79-Standard Forth Reference Manual and we find that Mr. Selsdon didn’t read it as carefully as he might. FORTH PROGRAMMING has these weak points, but we still think you’ll enjoy the book.

AND SO FORTH is an unusual book on Forth philosophy, and also contains a wealth of specific information on what to do with Forth, how to approach big jobs using it, and more. The book was created in the mold of the excellent FORTH workshops taught by Kim Harris. In fact, we initially feared that it might be pirating some of his better ideas and techniques. Kim assures us that an appropriate accommodation has been made, and that he may be using it in his future workshops. MMSFORTH does not include already does. If you’re mastered STARTING FORTH and PROGRAM DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION, and you haven’t attended our intermediate workshop, this will add some good ideas. The relatively high price of AND SO FORTH is hardly justified by the poor but readable print quality, but the content makes it worthwhile.

The Proceedings of the 1982 FORTH Modifications Laboratory in Asilomar, California, are almost out and we recommend this volume to our advanced users. Its 44 presentations just bubble with ideas for major and minor revamps of FORTH itself, and document these ideas with a wealth of 79-Standard Forth source code. It’s much less expensive than attending the Conference itself. Less fasting, too!

MMSFORTH USER WORKSHOPS FOR 1983

MMS offers a regular schedule of Boston-area MMSFORTH Workshops for a variety of topics and ability levels. See the price issues, or contact MMS for further details.

CRYPTOQUOTE PUZZLE, by Jill Miller

The solution to last issue's cryptoquote is:

- ON THE FORTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME, A FORTHWRITE FOR MY IBM PC (I7RS-80).

The March 1983 issue of SoftTalk Magazine announced a Limerick competition which we entered with this new cryptoquote. Enjoy solving it using your MMSFORTH GAMES DISKETTE:

PCNW7WOGK BVUWIKKVR QJTK LNVKO VOWS MTLXWLLUE LUWS, NJS JTS
RUVKO: JEM, JSJ, FUNUM, BF-NKRF, QQWT KTUNUM, JTS PKK1UWQO
FJWGT IGVKO,

GET-TOGETHER

Share your questions and answers with a MMSFORTH User Group! Contact MMS for help to start one in your region, or to revive one that seems inactive. Here is our present list of contacts for local MMSFORTH User Groups:

AZ
Ida Ruth Davis, 3245 North Gypsy Lane, Tucson 85705
(602)881-0467

CA
George Greenwald, 9802 Effingham Drive, Huntington Beach 92646
(714)893-7511 263 days, 989-1873 cents, elas.

CA
Earl Mortensen, 974 Pleasant Hill Road, Redwood City 94061
(415)364-5072

CA
Ron Nomenclum, 8160 Sunbrae Street, Apt 5, San Francisco 94131
(415)285-5053

CA
RH Arnold, 2845 N. Custer, Redwood City 94063
(415)362-5072

CA
Pete Parrot, 9781 Alameda, Redwood City 94062
(415)364-5072

IL
Roger Couger, 512 West 30th Place, Cicero 60650
(312)566-6183

LA
Ed Laughery, 1222 Jason Drive, Denham Springs 70726
(504)665-7357

MA
Jim Gereon, 22 Crestwood Drive, Framingham 01701
(617)443-1559, 872-1882 cents.

MI
Bob Zornetzer, 6408 South Washington, Lansing 48019
(517)339-9237

MI
Bill Schneider, 1425 North 14th Street, Lincoln 68508
(402)786-2115 days, 476-3711 cents.

NH
Gerg Reed, RMS, Box 167, Dummerston 05341
(802)774-3311 cents.

MI
Peter Keratoukas, 708 Forthland, Big Flats (607)582-5912 cents.

PA
Gus Rambhu, 806 Freedom Circle, Berkeley 94708
(215)388-8606

TN
Cliff Fiehler, 1980 Beale Court, Nashville 37212
(615)327-9123.

TX
Mike Alford, 3516 Espanola Avenue, Irving 75062
(214)256-2882 cents.

TX
"J.J.," 1603 Elm Street, Georgetown 78626
(512)863-7408; CBBS on 863-0964

TX
Dan Healy, 1151 Katy Freeway, Suite 150, Houston 77079
(713)867-2215

WA
Rod Proctor, 13520 NE 29th Place, Bellevue 98005

AU
Richard E. Thomas, 2501 14th Street, Atlanta, Georgia 30310
(404)575-5172.

AUSTRALIA
Peter Wragg, 2 Julia Street, Indocorp,Queensland 4068
(07)378-1625, and CL1641 on The Source.

AUSTRALIA
Dave Dartnell, 26 Elton Street, Dianella, Western Australia 6062
(08)446-8100

CANADA
Kathleen Parkes, 11490 Meadowlands Drive East, Ottawa,
Ontario K 2E 6R 5 (613)229-2412.

ENGLAND
John Newgas, 1 Philip Court, 80 Hornsey Lane, Highgate,
London N6 5LN (01)530-7071 days, 348-6518 cents.

JAPAN
Akira Akutsu, M.D., 2-174 Inaka, Yelo, Nagoya, 465.

WEST GERMANY: Nigel Head, Birn Gartenweg 93, 8600-Darmstadt

NOTE: Program trading is one popular facet of these meetings, but NOT commercial programs and WITHOUT MMSFORTH SYSTEMS abound! Promote legitimate sharing, discourage pirating, and take care not to jeopardize your own MMSFORTH serial number.

THE LAST WORD: "FORTH FORGET BASIC; ok" - Mike Alford, Irving, Texas

(Editor: This one seemed too good to ignore! While the supply lasts, MMS will be pleased to tuck a high-quality "MMSFORTH FORGET BASIC" bumper sticker into your next order or ce into your own self-stamped envelope, for fifty cents extra.)