

**6 READY-TO-RUN PROGRAMS ON DISK INSIDE!
BONUS PROGRAM: LIGHTNING-FAST RAMDISK!**

COMPUTE!'s

77711

PC

MAGAZINE

FOR IBM, TANDY, & PC COMPATIBLES

May 1990

**WORD PROCESSING
POWER!**

Get Started with WordMaster

**Exclusive Step-by-Step
Guide Includes
Program on Disk**

46 PRINTERS

**Grueling Tests
Tell Which One Is
Best for You**

HOW TO

**Master ANSI.SYS
Build Better Batch Files
Choose a Joystick**

SOFTWARE ON DISK *Now with Easier-to-Use Menu Interface!*
3 1/2" Disks Available for \$1!—See Page 69 for Details



WORDMASTER
World-class word processing (384K, DOS 2.1 or higher, and any monitor)



PCSTATS
PC hardware revealed (256K, DOS 3.0 or higher, and any monitor)



SINE
Dazzling spirographics! (256K, DOS 2.1 or higher, and graphics card)



DMP
Supercharged print spooler (256K, DOS 2.1 or higher, and any monitor)



SUJU
Unscramble words and win! (256K, DOS 2.1 or higher, and any monitor)



BEST OF THE BOARDS



Online Travel

George Campbell

As more and more PC users buy modems, commercial online services offer new and fascinating reasons for their customers to call and stay connected. In the last issue, I talked a bit about online shopping. This time we'll look at another online opportunity.

As you read this, you're probably beginning to plan your summer vacation. Getting away from it all seems to be an important goal for most of us. Unfortunately, making travel plans and booking airline flights, hotels, and rental cars can be hazardous to your budget and sanity.

Booking your own reservations normally means spending hours on the telephone. If you use a travel agent to make reservations, you always wonder if the agent has let his or her commissions get in the way of finding you a bargain.

Traveling by Modem

If you have a modem, a major credit card, and an account on CompuServe or GENie, your troubles are over. You can book your own travel reservations right from your keyboard. Easy menu-driven services let you check for the lowest prices, select from a wide range of options, and make confirmed reservations in minutes. You can book airline reservations, rental cars, and hotels—all from the comfort of your chair.

After making reservations, you can have airline tickets mailed directly to you, or you can pick them up at the airport. Your hotel and car rental reservations will be confirmed, and you'll be notified of the confirmations, right online. If your plans change, you can modify your reservations with a few keystrokes.

If you're just thinking about your plans but haven't made up your mind yet, you're welcome to browse

through most of the travel services. You can compare prices for a number of different vacations or just dream about luxury vacations you might never take.

There are three major services that offer travel reservations. To access them on CompuServe, type GO TRAVEL from any prompt. On GENie, just type TRAVEL. You'll see a menu showing your options. From that menu, you can choose the service you like best. You can also access the services directly from any prompt on GENie or CompuServe by giving the commands listed for each service.

To test each service, I set up a hypothetical trip to England. The trip involved a month in England, Scotland, and Wales, with air travel from California, a rental car for the month, and hotel bookings in major cities.

Up, Up, and Away

The oldest of the online travel services, OAG is available on both GENie (OAG) and CompuServe (GO OAGArO). It offers airline, car rental, and hotel bookings, but at a hefty surcharge. You'll pay from \$10 to \$28 per hour on top of the normal CompuServe or GENie rates, depending on the time of day.

OAG uses a series of menus to guide you through its complex list of options. Shortcut commands, available by entering an *H* at any prompt, can help cut down the time you spend on OAG.

Since the other two services are free of surcharges, you have to ask whether OAG is worth the extra expense. Sadly, the answer is no. This system is somewhat more difficult to use than the others, and the prices weren't low enough to offset the costs of the service.

Like OAG, EAASY SABRE is available on both GENie (SABRE) and CompuServe (GO SABRE). It's run by American Airlines, but isn't limited to that company's flights. Like the other

services, it uses a series of menus to speed you through your travel shopping. It's free of surcharges and, once you join the service, you'll receive a free user's guide to help you find your way around. There's no charge for membership.

You can look for your dream vacation on the EAASY SABRE system without joining, but becoming a member of the service lets you make reservations and gives you access to the American Airlines AAdvantage travel awards program.

How does EAASY SABRE stack up? It's very easy to use, with clear, no-nonsense menus. Once you learn the codes, you can use the shortcut commands to bypass the menus. This system offers information and reservations for 300 airlines, 45 car-rental companies, and over 18,000 hotels worldwide.

The test trip did reveal some flaws in EAASY SABRE. It failed to show the lowest-priced airline fares and couldn't find budget-priced hotels in some cities. On the other hand, it located the best prices I found anywhere for car rentals.

Free and Easy

Travelshopper, operated by PARS Travel Information Systems, is available only on CompuServe (GO PARS) and offers information and bookings for 700 airlines, 41 car rental companies, and over 19,000 hotels around the world.

Like EAASY SABRE, Travelshopper has no access surcharge and encourages browsing through its menu-driven system. To book reservations with your credit card, you must join the service, but membership is free.

For the test trip, Travelshopper quickly found the lowest airfares of the three services. The savings in ticket prices alone were dramatic. It also found the best hotel prices in most cities, along with good car rental rates.

Travelshopper's menu system

This Issue's Programs

There's a special treat in store for you on the disk included with this issue of *COMPUTE!'s PC Magazine*. We've discovered an outstanding word processing program to share with our readers. Naturally, we have several other great programs as well, including a bonus program. For more information on how to use the disk and our menu system, see "How to Use the Disk," elsewhere in this issue.

WordMaster

Topping the list of programs on the disk is *WordMaster*, written by William Farrar, a Washington programmer. No matter which word processing program you're currently using, you'll want to give *WordMaster* a try. It offers all the features of the big-name programs, including multiple windows, easy block editing, and drop-down menus. It even has automatic macro recording for one-stroke control of multiple commands and text.

When you work with *WordMaster*, you can use easy menus or mnemonic keystroke commands for every operation. If you can't remember a command, the program offers context-sensitive help. You'll be able to use the full range of type styles offered by your printer and display bold, italic, or underlined type on your monitor in different colors.

WordMaster supports the most popular printers, including the Hewlett-Packard LaserJet. If you like, you can customize the program for other printers. While there's no spelling checker built into the program, you can check your documents with Borland's *Turbo Lightning*, right from the menu.

WordMaster is a shareware program. If you like it and use it regularly, please register your version. The \$20 registration fee is a small price to pay for such powerful software.

For more information on using *WordMaster*, see the feature article "Getting Started with *WordMaster*" elsewhere in this issue.

DMP

Terry McGuire's *DMP* program is the perfect complement to *WordMaster*. It's a print spooler designed to let you be more productive. Instead of waiting for a document to print, you can use *DMP* to store your document on disk or in memory. Then, while you continue to work on other projects, *DMP* works in the background, printing your work while you use your PC for other jobs.

DMP can use your hard disk, extended memory, or EMS-style expanded memory to spool your printing. It's completely flexible, allowing you to customize it for your computer. It works with all your programs, from word processors to database programs, increasing your productivity by eliminating the time you wait for your printer. For advanced users, *DMP* also offers an extensive set of print-formatting tools.

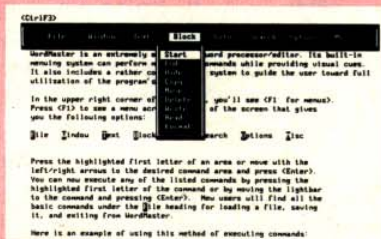
Another shareware program, *DMP* costs just \$18 to register. You can find more information about print spooling in the sidebar, "Printing While You Work," in the "Dueling Printers" feature in this issue.

PCStats

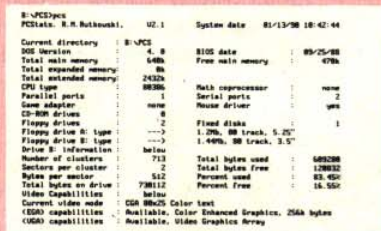
Richard Rutkowski, a programmer from Maspeth, New York, wrote *PCStats* to solve a simple problem. Without opening a computer's case, it's often difficult to tell just what's inside. *PCStats* can tell you just about everything you need to know in a second.

Run *PCStats* and you'll get a report on the screen telling you about the computer's drives, memory, CPU type, DOS version, and math coprocessor. You'll also find out about the serial, parallel, and game ports; CD-ROM drives; disk space; and video-adaptor types.

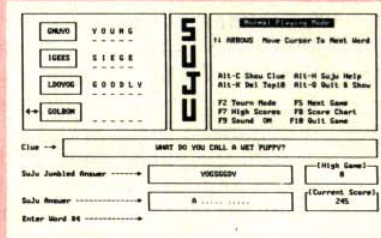
PCStats can tell you about the computer's extended and expanded memory and let you know how much memory is available.



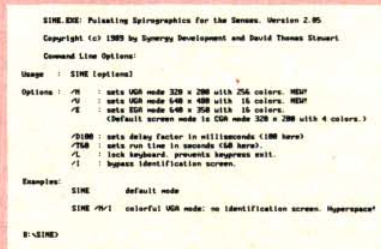
WordMaster is a full-featured word processor.



Check out computer hardware with PCStats.



Test your word skills with Suju.



Sine's display is easy to customize.

BEST OF THE BOARDS

You can use *PCStats* to keep track of your own computer or take it along when you work on someone else's PC. It's also an excellent idea to take *PCStats* with you if you're thinking about buying a new computer.

PCStats requires DOS 3.0 or higher to work properly. Due to variations in hardware on some IBM-compatible computers, the program occasionally can't find a piece of information, but it will report everything it can locate. *PCStats* is in the public domain; there's no registration fee.

Suju

Excellent games are hard to find, but when we find one, we like to share it with our readers. *Suju*, written by Raymond Buti, is challenging and fun to play.

If you've ever played Jumbles or Anagrams, *Suju* will be familiar. When you run the game, you see four scrambled words. It's your job to unscramble them. You get points for correct answers, but if you're wrong, you lose points. *Suju* can give you clues or even supply letters, but asking for help subtracts points from your score. Once you've solved the individual puzzles, you're challenged to solve the mystery word, which contains letters from the other words.

Suju has two modes of play: Normal and Tournament. In the normal mode, you can take all the time you need to solve the puzzles. Tournament mode adds a time limit, making it even more challenging.

Unlike many games for the PC, *Suju* should work just fine with a monochrome monitor. If you have a color system, however, *Suju* offers a full-color display. *Suju*'s shareware registration fee is only \$15.

Sine

We've offered several excellent programs by Canadian authors. *Sine*, by Ontario programmer David Thomas Stewart, is another example.

Sine is simple. It produces an ever-changing, swirling pattern of colors on your monitor. The effect is hypnotizing and relaxing. Running *Sine* is an excellent way to demonstrate the power of your color display.

You can run *Sine* on any color system, from basic CGA and EGA displays to VGA. If you have a VGA system, *Sine* can use either the 640 × 480, 16-color mode or the 320 × 200, 256-color mode for even more colors and resolution. To see a list of options, give the command `SINE /H`.

Sine is in the public domain, but the author holds a copyright on the program and asks for contributions from users. *Turbo Pascal* source code for *Sine* is available for a \$20 contribution.

Bonus Program—*SetRAM*

Many of you already have the software to set up an ultrafast disk drive simulation, or ramdisk, in your computer's memory. DOS versions 3.0 and higher include `VDISK.SYS` to do just that. Unfortunately, ramdisks using `VDISK` can't be removed from memory or changed in size without rebooting your PC.

SetRAM is different. Once you install it according to the simple instructions in the manual, you can create a ramdisk of any size. Later, when you need that memory for another program, you can remove the ramdisk with a simple command.

Ramdisks are extremely useful, and they're faster than the speediest hard disk. They do have a few disadvantages, however. Since they reside in memory, their contents can be lost if the power fails or if you shut down your computer. It's important to copy ramdisk files to a regular disk before you turn off the power or reboot.

Try using *SetRAM* to set up a ramdisk for your word processor files or for a program that constantly accesses the disk. You'll be amazed at the increase in speed. *SetRAM* is in the public domain, and its author is anonymous.

was the simplest to use of the three services, providing easy-to-understand choices. Its Low Fare Finder option makes searching for the lowest prices a snap.

Direct reservation services aren't the only travel-planning tools available. Both CompuServe and GENIE offer other options as well. You'll see a menu of these when you enter `GO TRAVEL` on CompuServe or `TRAVEL` on GENIE.

CompuServe's list includes the ABC Worldwide Hotel Guide. Of all the reservation systems, it found the least expensive hotels. Travel Forums on CompuServe can help you make contact with other travelers and get tips on your vacation plans. The International Information menu choice offers visa information, State Department travel advisories, and general travel information. Under the Travel Potpourri selection, there's an online travel magazine, *Adventures in Travel*, with articles and features on interesting destinations.

If you use GENIE, the `TRAVEL` command brings up a menu offering several selections. The Adventure Atlas gives you details on package vacations worldwide, with menus guiding you along the way. You can make bookings indirectly by leaving a message on this system. The Traveler's Information Services Round Table offers files and messages relating to vacations and travel, and it has lively discussions on travel in its messages. Finally, if Florida is your destination, you should check out the Destination Florida Round Table.

As you read this, your "Best of the Boards" columnist has his feet up at a British seaside resort, taking a long-needed vacation. That test trip just sounded too good to miss. I booked the entire vacation from my keyboard, using both `EAASY SABRE` and `Travelshopper` to find the best prices.

Sneak Preview

At press time, CompuServe announced its new Information Manager software for IBM-compatible computers. This new software will make navigating the CompuServe system easier, with drop-down menus and mouse support. You'll be able to prepare E-mail offline and send it automatically, or program your file transfers ahead of time. The speed increases over the normal system promise to save you money. The program will cost \$24.95, but CompuServe gives you a \$15.00 credit for online time when you order the software. I'll review the new program thoroughly in the next issue. 