POLY SYSTEM USER NOTICE - 1/83

COMPLETE SOFTWARE UPGRADE -

A MAJOR

PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT

Introducing The All-New 'Version 2.0' Software

POLY users will already have experienced the benefits of the continuing improvements program we have maintained since the introduction of the POLY learning support system.

A vital component of this policy is the constant review and upgrade of POLY product and services, which now culminates in the introduction of an entirely new version of the software for the system.

Known as 'Version 2.0', the new POLY software makes available a wide-ranging expansion of operational abilities, while also boosting overall system efficiency and reliability.

Users will gain considerable benefit from the implementation of 'Version 2.0'. To see why, please read on ...

YOU GET THESE GREAT NEW FEATURES IN THE 'VERSION 2.0' SOFTWARE ISSUE

1. MULTIPLE FILE-HANDLING ACCESS
    (Multiple Files Open For Write)

    The new POLY system software brings you an extensive multi-user file-handling system that simultaneously caters for more than one user.

    With it, more than one user may simultaneously

    - save files

    - have files (both random and sequential type) open for read and/or write

    - share the same file while open for write*

    With it, you as a sole user can

    - have more than one file open for write

    - have the same file open on different channels

    *Because of the complexities of sharing data (we have new commands LOCK and UNLOCK to aid this process) there is a need to exercise care here. Please study the appropriate example when you reach Appendix (A).

2. RS232 PORT SOFTWARE

    Now you can more fully utilise the RS232 port hardware facility already available for the POLY 1 unit. (Incidentally, if you have an early unit without such a port we'll be happy to fit one on request.)

The new 'Version 2.0' provides 'interrupts' to utilise peripherals such as printers, plotters, digitizers, and so on, as well as to permit the POLY 1 to act as a terminal to a remote computer.

Software appropriate to the device(s) you wish to use must be prepared in advance; examples of such programs are listed in Appendix (A).

3. USER-PASSWORD FILE PROTECTION
   (Security Features)

   A user-password system has been included as an important improvement. Implemented by the PROT utility, it enables users to protect files against both accidental and purposeful access by other users.

4. EXTENSIVE ERROR-CHECK ROUTINES
   (Safety Features)

   Extensive error checking, designed to further increase the reliability of the POLY, is provided by 'Version 2.0'.

   For instance, it will reduce the cause of many 'crashed' disks, caused by one user changing disk while another user is writing to it. To guard against this we have implemented a check on the disk door being opened while files are open for write.

5. UTILITIES

   POLY utilities have been improved under 'Version 2.0' and some new commands introduced. New utilities include RECOVER, DATE, DRIVE, and GPRINT. This latter program dumps

the graphics screens onto a disk file to be printed on the printer. Single Disk Copy, (SDC) has been modified to make it easy to copy files larger than POLY 1 memory size.

6. ARITHMETIC OPERATIONS

The efficiency of arithmetic operations has been substantially improved with programs running up to 3 times faster than before. This affects the efficiency of other operations (for example PRINT when number conversion takes place).

7. MANUALS

Now that we've released Version 2.0, new manuals are provided for BASIC, Utilities, Pascal and Operating.

8. GENERAL

Many other improvements have also been made, as you can see by the list of changes given in Appendix (B).

9. TESTING

Extensive testing has been carried out on Version 2.0. We call it '5-step' testing, because -

- All new features have been tested to ensure they work correctly.

- Existing features have been tested to guard against regression.

- Several different configurations have been run with different mixes to ensure system integrity.

- All courseware has been thoroughly tested on the new system.

- Benchmarks have been run to prove the increased efficiency.

10. NEW PRODUCTS

The implementation of Version 2.0 Operating System makes possible the introduction of significant improvements in the efficiency and cost effectiveness of developing "courseware" on the POLY system.

POLYTOOLS are productivity aids which provide the following benefits, not available on any other micro computer system.

(i) Courseware preparation does NOT require users to have detailed knowledge of programming or languages such as BASIC or PASCAL.

(ii) Courseware for all areas of curricula may be prepared by staff with particular subject skills ensuring total relevance of material.

(iii) Courseware preparation time is drastically reduced.

(iv) Courseware preparation is accomplished directly by staff - no intermediate programming step is required.

(v) Courseware may be developed "on system" simplifying preparation and avoiding equipment redundancy.

(vi) POLYTOOLS are learning support oriented, thus satisfying specific classroom requirements with features not available on business or home computers.

Several new aids are introduced and the library for

POLYTOOLS now includes;

> PROFORMA
>
> POLYTAS
>
> POLY PILOT
>
> POLYGEN
>
> POLYART
>
> POLYMENU

The first four POLYTOOLS are high level languages that enable the user to develop his or her own specific courseware (for both education and training) without the requirement of a detailed knowledge of programming, or of a general purpose programming language (such as Pascal or BASIC). Testing with remedial action is catered for and provision is made for using all the special learning oriented graphics facilities of POLY.

POLYART is a graphics editor that enables complex pictures to be drawn using simple commands and saved for later use in a courseware module.

POLYMENU is a menu-generating program for producing menus for arbitrary selections of programs providing a stabilising reference for new students.