

NYC Newton Users Group December '94 Newsletter

reviews - minutes - commentary and more...

NYCNUG Information

Reviews

Leverage

Time To Go

Tax Pro

Ellegence

December's Minutes

Letters to the Editor

Classified(s)

Contacts

(New York City Tri-State edition)
all material ©1995 NYCNUG

Publisher Information

Published by the New York City Newton Users Group. Compiled into Newton BookMaker format by kenn lowy. Comments and suggestions should be sent to: klowy2@eworld.com

Reviews

Below are the reviews for the month as written by the users who won the software at the meetings monthly raffle.

Leverage

review by kenn lowy

Leverage is a flat file database management tool for the Newton. setting up a database is easy and straightforward. unfortunately, you have no control over how the database really looks. all of the fields are layed out the same, although you can choose what type of field it is [text, string, number, date etc.]. once you've created a field, you can't decide to move it. for example, you create a field called "Date", then another called "Name". then you remember that you need a field called "Time". The only way to get it to appear before name would be to delete the "Name" field, create the "Time" field and then re-create the "Name" field.

Leverage is a decent database. my main problems with it are simply that you cannot draw the database like you would using a program like FileMaker Pro. there is also currently no on screen help function. this is a major drawback, and a little questionable. it means that you need to have the manual with you when doing complex things such as linking with another database [another nice feature of Leverage] or creating queries. all in all, this is a decent flat file database for the newton that's reasonable fast and small. there are other databses programs coming on the Newton platform soon. unless you really need a database for your newton today, I would suggest waiting another month when several new programs will be available.

Leverage is published by:

Balcones Software

13102 Briar Hollow Dr.

Austin, TX 78729

512 353 7289

balcones@azulita.cactus.org

Time To Go

review by kenn lowy

At first glance Time To Go appears to be a nice share ware program. I was hard pressed to figure out why someone would want to buy something like this. having dabbled quite a bit into Newton programming, I know that it isn't that hard to create this program. Time To Go includes a bunch of clocks for the Newton. keep in mind, the Newton screen, on the current models, is very small! so any clock is going to take up a olot of real estate, in essence, obliterating everything else on the screen. yea, when I put a quarter in a parking meter, I'm such a ditz, that I need my newton to remind when fifteen minutes has passed. my mind is so cluttered with ultra important information, that a little reminder that says "put another quarter in the meter at noon" is just too much for my brain to handle. ok, so the truth is, I might actually need that type of reminder every once in a while. but, I have to leave that screen open on my Newton for the alarm to work. thereby begating it's usefulness for a lot of us. on the other hand, there's an alarm clock module that it is handy if you're on the road somewhere and don't have an alarm with you. for example, you're in boston for MacWorld, and you have an important meeting at 7 am. you don't the hotel operator to wake you. so have your Newton do it. i've actually used this feature when my watch started freaking out about doing it. or I was sleeping through my alarm a lot.

In conclusion, it's cute and somewhat useful. if you have money to toss out the window, then definately buy it! because the truth is, if you have that much money, then you don't care if you ever use it.

Time To Go is published by:

extra lead

1442A Walnut Street (suite 405)

Berkeley, CA 94709-1496

Orders (800) 642 4321

Phone (510) 337 1010

Fax (510) 540 1057

extralead@aol.com

Tax Pro

review by Eric Sohn

Tax Pro is a package for estimating your Federal Income Tax. It is produced by Advanced Mobile, and lists for \$49.95, although it can be had for \$36.95 from the latest PDA Direct catalogue or \$37.99 from MacZone.

Tax Pro contains a disclaimer that is an estimator only and, that for detailed information, you should contact a tax adviser or the IRS. Despite this, the basic information it supplies - amount of limited deductibility of certain expenses and the amount of standard deductions, for example - is accurate. However, to be safe, I would not trust its calculation of taxes owed - I'd use the calculated figures for adjusted income, credits, deductions, etc. and get the actual tax owed from the 1040 form. Tax Pro has a button on the status bar allowing you to select 1992, 1993 and 1994 tax years. In this regard, Tax Pro will need updating each year for new tax tables and tax law changes. However, the only item likely to change from year to year (other than the tables) is the amount of the standard deduction which, if push comes to shove, can be entered as a single itemized deduction, eliminating the need to purchase updates. SO, in this regard, Tax Pro can be useful, to do the math for you, if for nothing else.

However, from an application design standpoint, Tax Pro is sadly lacking. It is neither particularly user-friendly nor consistent nor complete.

First, a description of the basic design. There is a main worksheet, with subsidiary worksheets to calculate the figures to be used on the main worksheet. The worksheets are popped up, for the most part, from the Worksheets button on the status bar. The subsidiary worksheets listed are: Income, Itemized Deductions, Credits, Other taxes, Payments, Capital Gains Tax and Alternative Minimum Tax. There is also the previously-mentioned tax year button on the status bar, which defaults to 1994. The action button allows you to copy the data to Notes or to delete all data.

Some things it gets right. It defaults the name field to the Personal Prefs name. The tax year button label is the actual year selected, not the phrase "Tax Year". Tax Pro does provide pickers to choose number of exemptions, standard vs. itemized deductions, and filing status. When itemized deductions are selected, it pops up the Itemized Deductions worksheet. When data is entered on the Credits worksheet, the text on the main worksheet changes to a button.

There are buttons to bring up the limited deductibility items, like Medical expenses. These are good, because you can enter the actual expense figure, let Tax Pro figure out your deductible amount and leave that on the Itemized Deductions worksheet. And the Alternative Minimum Tax is implemented as a scroll menu, allowing easy access to any part of a particularly long set of data and calculations.

However...

First, there is no consistency. Although the Credits static text on the main worksheet

becomes a button, why not the other fields, like Income?

Actually, it turns out that Income does become a button, but only if you have capital gains tax. Why not for other income?

Second, it's not user friendly. Why aren't the static text fields on the main worksheet buttons from the start - why should you have to use the Worksheets button the first time? When entering data in fields, you need to double-tap to bring up the numeric keyboard. Why? All data entered in Tax Pro, except for the Name field, is numeric. Why can't it be implemented like the Email field in Names which, when selected, automatically brings up the keyboard?

There are some silly things, too. There's a button to bring up a Foreign Tax Credits worksheet, but the popup contains one data entry field and no noticeable calculation behind it.

Another feature lacking that would be useful would be the ability to save all the data for a given tax year, so that multiple years of tax data could be saved on the Newt. Similarly, if the calculated tax field was editable, one could correct the figure calculated by Tax Pro, giving you an accurate record of your return.

There is another thing that Tax Pro lacks: a more complete capital gains worksheet. The current one just has fields for short and long-term capital gains amounts. Why not something similar to the IRS' form?

One thing I don't fault Tax Pro for is the lack of Schedule C (self employment) calculations. To expect the package to contain P&L calculations might be asking too much.

These previous 2 items bring up a basic problem: if you have self employment or capital gains income, you will need to use paper forms, in addition to Tax Pro. It kind of defeats the purpose of having a package, to a certain extent. One could, in theory, just use the paper forms and a calculator.

My last complaint is about the Action button. Why no Print, Fax or eMail options? I'd like to have the option to enter my data and either print it out for reentry into my 1040 and/or records, or fax or email it to my accountant.

To sum up, Tax Pro is not the best-designed PDA package in the world. It lacks features it should have, and wasn't well thought out. However, it is a useful package in that it will save most people a fair amount of calculating work.

Elegance

by Gilles Lonqueu

GENERAL INFORMATION

ELEGANCE is produced by tanis development of New York City

ELEGANCE is a utility program with 2 basics purposes, instant access to features that deals with text appearance and menus to easily access newton tools and other applications

the software consists of 2 main packages the main program (ELEGANCE itself) which appears on the Newton as a movable & shrinkable toolbar. this toolbar is accessible everywhere because it is always on top of the other windows . and the customizer which is called fom ELEGANCE

The price is 59.95 (the newton source December 1994)

ELEGANCE = 54,684 bytes

The Customizer = 63,948 bytes

9 K of internal memory are used by the customizer even if it is stored on the card

THE TOOLBAR consists of 9 small boxes (icons) When you tap one of these box (except the first one) a menu appears allowing you to perform some actions

icon no.1

symbol = small cross

function = move the toolbar (drag & drop) bring it to its home position

icon no.2

symbol = letter F

function = allow to change the font of a selection (3 different fonts)

icon no.3

symbol = double arrow pointing up & down

function = allow to change the size of a selection (9 different sizes from 9 to 48)

icon no. 4

symbol = letter S

function = allow to change the style of a selection (10 different styles = bold italic shadow etc) styles are also mixable

icon no. 5

symbol = a period

function = allow to change the pen size (9 different sizes)

icon no. 6

symbol = a clock

function = allow to change the sleep time (11 different times from 30 sec to 1 hr + never + sleep now) and allow to perform a Reset (very usefull)

icon no. 7

symbol = a small hammer

function = display the customizable menu (see, part D for more info)

icon no. 8

symbol = variable

function = display the application menu

According to what application you are running the menu is different and so is the icon

While running the notepad the icon is a blank page The menu allows you to reach the first / last note and to scan up /down You can also create a new note (internal or on the card)

While running the names the icon is a small face The menu allows you to create a new card (internal or on the card)

There is nothing yet for dates

While in the extras drawer, the icon is a small drawer The menu gives you access to the package manager a small program that gives infos (size, location etc) about packages even invisibles ones. From there you can also remove these PKG.

icon no. 9

symbol = epsilon

function = this is the ELEGANCE menu. From there you can close, shrink ELEGANCE see "About" and acces the customizer / menu Editor

D. THE CUSTOMIZER

The Customizer enables you to create a menu that will appear when pressing the seventh icon on the toolbar (the small hammer).

There is a default menu but you can change it by adding or removing whatever you want.

1. The default menu

Is composed of 3 groups of commands

The first group gives you instant acces, wherever you are to :

- Prefs
- Calculator
- In box
- Out box

The second group enables all the built in keyboards you to appear from wherever you are.

The third group is a nice command called " Calcule It "

You write a formula begining by =

You highlight it

You select Calcule it and then the result of your formula appears on you Newton (you can also use functions)

2. Customizing your menu

From the default menu you can add or remove items (even a separator bar to make your menu cleaner!!!)

Addable items are for example packages you heve installed on your Newton.

Then, from anywhere you can launch your favorite programm by selecting its name on the menu. You don't need to go back to the extras drawer (How Convenient!)

CONCLUSION

I find this programm very usefull. It is much easier to access application in the extras drawer (packages & built in functions). Having instant access to many different styles

NYCNUG Minutes for Dec '94

The third meeting of the New York City Newton Users Group conveyed with as many attendees this time as the last time with several new faces in the group. The meeting was held at 222 Broadway on the 23rd floor. Eric Sohn presided over the meeting

New business brought before the group were as follows:

- 1)The group was asked to think about how NYCNUG should be structured; what positions should the group have and what would their responsibilities be.
- 2)Getting NYCNUG certified as an Apple Users Group which will enable the group to obtain new software releases and obtain vendor contacts that normally go through only Apple Users Groups.
- 3)A NYCNUG newsletter which would cover the meetings and package reviews by its members and others who would be interested in our activities. It was agreed that all members who obtain software at the meetings would demo it at the next meeting and provide a text version of the reviews. Text is currently being sent to kenn lowy who has agreed to compile the reviews and convert it to book form. All reviews and other NYCNUG newsletter items should be sent to kenn at klowy2@aol.com.

Under old business, all those people who attended NYCNUG#2, rest assured that APPGEN will be sent out to you. Software packages that were demoed at this meeting were Tax Pro, Elegance, PocketMoney and Action Names & Agenda. Tax Pro was the only one that did not get a good review. Demoed by Eric Sohn, this package was lacking in functionality and found to be poorly designed.

This meetings raffle winners were Eric Sohn who won Personal Media, kenn lowy who won Leverage and Lionell Swanston who won the book "Programming for the Newton" with an introduction by Walter R. Smith [the father of NewtonScript]. Look for these products to be demoed at the next meeting along with demos of Accountable, Time To Go and, hopefully, Pocketcall.

NYCNUG holds its meetings at 222 Broadway on the 23rd floor on the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM. The next meeting will be held on January 18. Hope to see you there!

Letters to the Editor

This being the first edition of the Newsletter, there aren't any letters to the editor. But there could be next month, if only you'd take out your Newton and write us. Keep it short, concise and witty. Or long, obnoxious and angry. Those are your choices. If your letter does not meet the above criteria, it will be included anyway.

Send letters (electronically only) to:

klowy2@eworld.com

For the most part, letters will not be replied to due to the huge amount of mail that we have already not received.

Classifieds

Many of us have equipment that is now outdated, or need equipment that others (of us) may have. If you fit into one of these categories, please send an e-mail to klowy2 with a listing you'd like to have appear.

for example:

Original Newton MessagePad w/2 meg flash card and external fax modem. Need to sell right away. Contact pres@whitehouse.gov for more info.

this is only an example!

Contacts

Below are the names and addresses of some people who you may choose to contact for more information on the enclosed articles. Some of the addresses have nothing to do with any of the articles and are included for your enjoyment. You'll know the difference or be thoroughly confused. If you're confused, then this is an indication that the address is in the amusing category. Keeping in mind that humour is a very subjective thing.

pres@whitehouse.gov

esohn@aol.com

klowy2@eworld.com

see you next month...