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APL*PLUS III For Windows Version 1.2 — Brief Notes

Dick Bowman

Dogon Research

2 Dean Gardens

London E17 3QP England

Tel: +44-181-520-6334

E-mail: bowman@apl.demon.co.uk

My previous review of APL*PLUS III described the original Version 1.1 and contained some references to Release 1.2 which I had not at that time received. I now have this release and would like to briefly describe some of the new features and their uses.

Installation

The update pack contained five disks (four for the main product, and a separate one for the VBX interface) along with an update manual, from which it is safe to infer that the changes are not marginal. Installation over Version 1.1 was straightforward, and updates Win32s if it finds that your present version is older than the one on the installation disks.

The only problem I have experienced related to Win32s — which offered the well-known Growstub error when using APL*PLUS III on my portable machine; applying Microsoft's fix for fancy mouse drivers cured it.

Session Manager

Colour syntax display is selectable — not only can you assign your own selection of colours to the various components of an APL session (primitive functions, system functions and so forth), Release 1.2 also offers visible indications of unmatched parentheses and quotes. This is at the expense of some slight degradation in screen update times and you will have to make your own decisions about how to trade these off. For situations which involve maintenance of (other people's?) highly parenthesised code this change alone is invaluable.

The debug menu has also been enhanced.

Picture Class

An aspect of APL*PLUS III which I was critical of in Release 1.1 was the special way in which the programmer needed to cater for graphical images; this has now been rectified with the addition of the Picture class. However — if you need to include graphic selection in your applications it will still be necessary to drop down to the lower-level interface provided by `⌵wcall`.

MDIForm Class

Another new class added, allowing you to write MDI applications...

```
'fmMDI' ⌵w1 'New' 'MDIForm' ('where' 10 10 20 20) ('scale' 5)
'fmMDI.fmChild' ⌵w1 'New' 'Form' ('where' 10 10 100 20)
```

Very simple and straightforward to use.

VBX Controls

It seems to have become obligatory to be able to use VBX controls with all Windows programming languages and APL*PLUS III 1.2 is no exception. A sample is included. Adding new controls is straightforward enough, involving only a change to the `APLW.INI` file in addition to installing the controls. As a recognised cheapskate I had no independently-obtained VBX controls to hand, but decided to experiment with the spinbutton provided with J (review coming soon). Addition of the file name to `APLW.INI` resulted in the spinbutton automatically appearing in the JWed toolbox, which was good. What was less good was to find that any attempt to add this control to a form with JWed got me a dialogue box telling me I had no license to use the control in the design environment. Oh well, you don't win them all. The control was usable when I defined the form in APL sessions and functions. With MDI and VBX controls it surely becomes a simple matter for the APL application programmer to build applications which the end user cannot distinguish from applications built with other programming languages.

Summary

In this space I've been able to offer only a glimpse of the new features included in Release 1.2; there is much more, ranging from extensions to control structures, through 19 new GUI properties and methods to extensions to the interface to DLLs.

Release 1.2 is very much more than a marginal increment to the APL*PLUS III product; Manugistics have made the programmer interface significantly more productive and have also broadened the range of applications we can build with their product. More is on the way; most of you will have seen the announcement of ODBC support, for example. ■