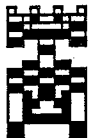Do you have a question? Maybe you have discovered a new ACTIONAUT application or have stumbled across a GREAT piece of freeware that would be of interest to other members of the ACTIONAUT community. We want to hear from you.

Write to:
**ACTIONEER
P.O. Box 50246
Palo Alto, Ca. 94303**

## LETTERS:

**Wow !! Why are you people giving away such a great program ?**   Mark Anderson
Vienna, VA

ACTIONAUTS was originally developed by APT for a large business software publisher that decided (wisely, perhaps!) to keep out of the home market. The result was that APT regained control of the product and after a detailed analysis of the consumer software market ( consisting of frantic phone calls to broke software publishers ), decided that the best way to get the software into the world at this time is to give it away and see what happens.

**Who designed the ACTIONAUTS ?**
Bill Weeden
New York, NY

We did ..... Rob Fulop wrote the code and Lon Richter developed the graphics and animation. Rob has designed many hit videogames for Atari (MISSILE COMMAND, NIGHT DRIVER) and was one of the founders of Imagic where he created DEMON ATTACK and COSMIC ARK as well as being named Billboard Magazine's "Game Designer of the Year" in 1983.

**.... can I make copies of the software for my classroom ?**   Lawrence Dunham
Oakland, CA

Yes, by all means. From the main screen select the TOYBOX feature. Now select COPY PROGRAM and follow the screen directions. Make sure to have some blank disks handy.

## ACTIONBITS
### News from the ACTIONAUT Community

**• LOADSTAR puts freeware on disk**

The LOADSTAR disk features many useful programs on a monthly basis including the programs published in POWER PLAY Magazine. They are featuring the ACTIONAUT software in their February '86 Issue.

*ISSUE #21*

**• AHOY Magazine features ACTIONAUTS**

Look for AHOY Magazine running a feature in early 1986 including offering the software on their own disk publication.

*APRIL '86*

**• QUANTUM LINK**

Very, very affordable C64 tele - communications .... Have you ever tried this service, for $ 9.95 a month it is a bargain that shouldn't be missed!
  Call : Quantum Link
       (800) 392 - 8200
       8620 Westwood Center
       Vienna, VA 22180

**• COMPUTER BOSS INTERNATIONAL ...**

.... a leading publisher in Europe has signed a license arrangement to distribute ACTIONAUTS overseas.   Allo, Allo !

# IS FREEWARE WORTHWHILE ?

## Examining a New Distribution Network: the Users

Archie Bunker once said "That's how you know what's better in America -- it costs more." We all laugh at Archie's reasoning despite the fact that his perception of value is not uncommon. Behind door number one is a new $35,000 automobile; behind door number two is a $7,000 automobile. Which would you take, sight unseen?

Now suppose there is another brand new automobile behind door number three, and suppose that its manufacturer will let you have it for a donation of $500. And suppose the manufacturer's policy is that you don't have to pay for the car if it doesn't really suit your needs. You can return it or pass it on to someone else at no charge. Question: would you take a chance on this ridiculously inexpensive car when you know that a "good" car always cost you at least $7,000 in the past?

The question is one of perceived value, and it is plaguing a growing number of computer software developers who are pioneering a form of publishing and distribution that goes by the various names of freeware, shareware, user supported ware, etc. This article will refer to it as freeware.

Because of the name FREEware, many people confuse it with software in the public domain. The biggest difference between freeware and public domain software is that the former is registered by the author and protected by the same laws governing the use of a program such as Lotus 1-2-3 or Pac-Man. Public domain software has no copyright owner, and can be obtained without obligation to the original author.

That being the case, public domain software represents the low end of the performance scale. Generally speaking, it isn't professionally crafted.

Freeware is another story. There has been a lot of excellent freeware published successfully in the last few years. But just how free is freeware, and how do its publishers stay in business?

Several years ago, Andrew Flugelman, formerly the editor of PC World, decided that people were paying too much for software. At the time, the only inexpensive alternative was public domain software like that typed out of computer magazines and books. So Flugelman came up with the concept of freeware. He posted his software on computer bulletin boards, sent it to users groups, and gave it to friends and associates. A message on the title screen encouraged everyone to make copies of the programs and distribute them. Users pleased with the software were encouraged to send a donation to Flugelman's company, Headlands Press.

Flugelman bypassed the retail stores and their markups, passing on the savings to users. He didn't advertise. He didn't promote. He simply published. The idea was to distribute his software as widely as possible without incurring great cost; in other words, he would use word of mouth and trust in the good will of satisfied customers.

### And it worked!

In fact, it worked so well that Flugelman's PC-Talk III, a telecommunications package, is today one of the most widely used programs of its kind. Comparable programs sell for upwards of $200, yet you can download PC-Talk III from many computer bulletin boards freely. If you are satisfied with the results, Flugelman asks for a $35 donation. Not surprisingly, he has made a lot of money by providing such good software at such a fair price.

The success of the freeware concept led others to try the idea. A company called Quicksoft published PC-Write, a word processor, and it's still available for a $10 registration fee. RBBS, a remote bulletin board system, is available through the Capitol PC User's Group (Washington, D.C.) for $8. Jim Button has published a number of excellent programs as freeware, among them PC-File, a database management system for $10. In nearly all cases, the registration fees involved with freeware bring benefits to the registered user, such as product updates, newsletters, telephone support and new product announcements.

# ACTIONEER QUARTERLY

## ACTIONAUTS    Go Online ..... 415-322-3213

The APT ACTION BBS (Bulletin Board System) is now online. The bulletin board has been set up to serve as a direct link to ACTIONAUT subscribers. All registered users can call the board (300 Baud) 24 hours a day. The board serves 3 functions :

- **ACTIONAUT software available for downloads**
- **A place to meet other users and exchange applications**
- **Up-to-date news and information**

In addition to supporting the ACTIONAUT program, the BBS is devoted primarily to exploring the potential of computers as an entertainment medium. APT makes available a wide variety of the best free software available including a number of games to be played between two or more computers over the telephone.

Users of the system are encouraged to upload quality ('freeware') software and to participate in the various ongoing discussions. The charter of the BBS is to develop a close relationship between APT and our "customers". As a registered user, your account has been opened and we are waiting to hear from you ....

> **415-322-3213**
> **APT Action BBS**
> **24 hours**
> **300 Baud**

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**('Freeware' continued ......)**

There have been many other good business, education, and utility programs published as freeware, but the concept hasn't attracted the attention of talented entertainment software designers until recently, and good products are few and far between. This is just now beginning to change.
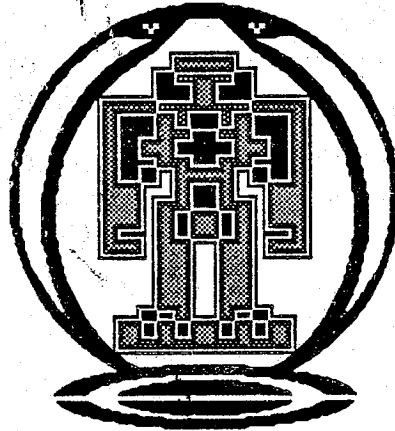
One of the first major offerings in the freeware entertainment area is Actionauts, from Advanced Program Technology. It is a professionally designed playset of eight programmable video robots, and is being made available, free of charge, to Commodore 64 user groups and bulletin boards, where it may be copied or downloaded. In fact, the title screen suggests you to copy it for your friends using the built-in copy routine. And the copies you make can also make other copies.

Advanced Program Technology requests $3 for complete documentation and to include you on their mailing list. But you don't necessarily have to send a donation for ACTIONAUTS. It is APT's first freeware product, and the company is providing it freely to attract attention. Future products, already in the works, will likely be offered for a nominal registration fee.

Freeware is a very democratic publishing technique, allowing anyone to use a program before having to buy it. Users are encouraged to copy and distribute the programs because this saves authors the expenses of disk duplication, advertising, and distribution. Registered users are rewarded for their honesty by becoming eligible for support from the publisher.
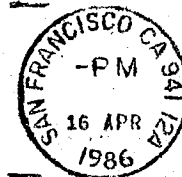
The success of the freeware concept gives reason to rejoice in the voluntary, unenforceable process of give and take. For so long as the majority of people do not abuse freeware by infringing the author's rights, we will have the privilege of using it.

ACTION ARTS ™

FROM: APT

Advanced Program Technology
P.O. Box 50246
Palo Alto, California    94303

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