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January 1987

NEWSLETTER

People get very uptight about dates in disk operating systems.
Frequently, of course it is a matter of considerable importance. On the
other hand I must confess that a large majority of my working disks have
the date prompt taken out! Anyway, the fact that in both TRSDOS 6.2 for
the Model 4 and LDOS 5.1.4a for the Model I and Model III, date stamping
will run out on the 31st December 1987 has caused some concern to a number
of customers. Up until recently, all we could tell you was that we would
be handling the updates. The purpose of this letter is to give you more precise
details.

The position has been considerably complicated because two of the main
U.S. software houses in the TRS-80 field had what one might call upheavals,
during the last year or so. Logical Systems split itself into two. One
Logical Systems Incorporated, the other Logical Systems Company. The latter
took over the retail operation, LSI itself retained the royalty side. The
guiding light of LSI is Bill Schroeder and he moved down to Colorado. The
manager that he sold LSC to only stayed with it a short while and then passed
it on to Misosys. Roy Soltoff of Misosys, was, of course, one of the prime
authors of both LDOS and TRSDOS 6.x, so by the time all of these shenanigans
had finished, the people most interested in LDOS and its deratives were spread
across the North American continent. All of this causes us a lot of problems
but it is, as they say, transparent to the end user. With the one exception
that, what is to a large extent the same update, is actually coming from
two different original sources and therefore bears two different names.
I think it was probably a mistake to make the names similar, but for better
or worse, the Model 4 TRSDOS 6.2 upgrade, is called LS-DOS 6.3 and is only
applicable to, and will only work on, the Model 4 or the Model 4P. The update
for Model III follows on more traditional updating rules and is called LDOS
5.3. What happened to LDOS 5.2 I am afraid I would not know! Although,
as I have said, it is transparent to you lucky people out there LS-DOS 6.3
is actually coming from LSI and LDOS 5.3 from Misosys. My guess is that
there never will be an update to LDOS 5.1.4a for the Model I machine and
that of course includes the Genies. Soltoff says that if he can get a 1,000
pre-paid orders, he will do it, but my guess is that that will probably never
come about. If it does, of course, we will be putting out the news as soon
as we can.

So far as delivery is concerned, as of January 5th, LS-DOS 6.3 is in
stock. The cost is £25.00 plus VAT, plus 75p shipping, which all adds up
to £29.50. LDOS 5.3 is expected in stock by the end of January and has been
provisionally priced at the same amount.

There are, of course, differences in the two upgrades but they do when
installed, actually make the two disk operating systems even more compatible.
The principal enhancement for them both, of course, is to extend the date
range from 1987 to 1999. The range also stretches backwards for seven years,
so the complete range is actually from 1980 to 1999. Time stamping of files
has also been added.

The Access password in LDOS and the User password in TRSDOS have been dropped, and will now be interpreted as if they were blank. Both updates include a free utility called TED. This is a screen text editor for ASCII files.

Both Basic interpreters have been enhanced. The changes are slightly different between the two updates. It is not clear at this time, whether the cross reference utility included in LS-DOS 6.3, is available in the update to LDOS. Certainly, the latter contains a number of enhancements to Basic, and there is a CMD"V" extension which is used to dump a list of active variables and values, whilst a program is running. On the other side of the coin, the LDOS upgrade now includes INPUT@ and I am not sure that the LS-DOS 6.3 does. Both come with a conversion utility for changing the date format on disks written under the old system. There are a number of Library Command changes, but most of them follow naturally upon the date and time changes.

In summary, and I shall probably get shot by someone for saying it, it seems to me that there are essentially three major improvements. First of all the expanded date range. Secondly, the addition of a screen editor utility and finally the changes to Basic. Certainly, if these do not thrill you, the update is not worthwhile.

It is difficult to know how many active Model III's and 4's there are in the English marketplace. I say active, because I get the feeling that a large number of customers have still got their 8-bit machines, even though they have gone up to 16-bit, but they are languishing in the attic or somewhere. Nontheless, we expect there to be considerable demand for both upgrades, so if there is any delay in delivery from us on these two items, I hope you will forgive us.

Now that your machines have been given a further 13 years life "datewise" - I trust that orders will be romping in from you for our other Tandy software.

Just one last plug, the 1000EX is, so we are told by Tandy, selling very well, so we would like to remind you that our IBM software runs on that machine and the catalogue is available on request.

A J Harding
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