

NEWS FROM



Why isn't RISCOS Ltd at the Wakefield 2001 Show?

With the increasing demand for skilled RISC OS programmers RISCOS Ltd has been developing RISC OS since June 2000 using contract software engineers rather than staff employees. This has been interpreted by some people as "RISCOS Ltd has NO programmers" which is luckily not the case. However to make the best use of those peoples' skills, we have cut back on our presence at exhibitions, since many programmers are happier working in isolation, rather than trying to help users directly with their queries.

I'm sure that many of you will appreciate that some very good software is produced by people who never appear in public! With many other activities underway, it was decided that it would not be possible to attend the Wakefield Show this year, but I shall be visiting the RISC OS Expo 2001 organised by the Big Ben Club in Holland in a few weeks time, to meet up with our European customers.

Paul Middleton
Managing Director
RISCOS Ltd

And now the news that you have been waiting for



RISC OS Select

In the two years since we took over the development of the desktop version of RISC OS there have been major changes in the RISC OS marketplace. RISCOS Ltd is adapting to those changes and RISC OS Select is the first result of those changes.

26 bit versions of RISC OS under the project name of RISC OS 4.5 will in future be supplied on a yearly subscription basis. This is similar to the way that yearly maintenance and upgrade schemes are provided for other major software packages. From now on RISC OS will be updated on a rolling basis, instead of releasing a major upgrade every couple of years.

The subscription scheme will be called RISC OS Select.

The advantage of the scheme is that the timescale for fixing bugs and offering new features will be significantly decreased.

Future components of RISC OS will be released in two formats:-

1. ROM images which can be softloaded to replace the existing physical ROM's
2. Individual modules that can be loaded as part of the Boot sequence.

The new ROM image and modules can be stored on local Hard Disc, on a Network, or loaded directly from CD.

Part of the new ROM image boot sequence will provide the option to choose which medium you wish to boot from, so that you may for example wish to keep a backup of your usual Boot sequence on CDR and then install the new RISC OS Select Boot sequence onto your main hard drive.

All Subscribers to RISC OS Select will receive up to 3 CD's per year i.e one CD approximately every 4 months. The CD will contain both Beta software and official release versions. It is anticipated that components which are issued as Beta on one CD will become official releases on the next CD. Interim components will also be available from a password protected area of the new RISC OS Select Web Site.

The scheme is suitable both for users who want to be sure of receiving the latest fixes & official releases and also for users who like to have the latest experimental modules & features.

(Subscribers to RISC OS Select will be provided with a method whereby they can choose to just install the release components or else they can try out the latest features, knowing that they can restore to a known working set-up at any time. To do this each Select CD will contain a "safe" boot image with all the released upgrades and patches pre-installed as a working disc image.)

N.B. Users will have to initially purchase RISC OS 4 in ROM either as an upgrade from RISC OS 3.5/6/7 or else as an integral part of a new computer. It will NOT be possible to softload RISC OS Select packages onto anything other than RISC OS 4.



Purchasing RISC OS 4

New Users

New users will be have three choices when purchasing RISC OS 4 in the future.

i) To join the RISC OS Select Scheme for £179.

For this they will receive the current full RISC OS 4 package and a one year subscription to the Select Scheme.

or

ii) To buy the current RISC OS 4.02 ROM and installation CD for the special new reduced price of £95.

(This will NOT include any bundled applications, such as Vector, Writer, ImageFS or the new RISC OS Internet Suite)

or

iii) Buy the current full package with bundled applications and Manuals CD for the new reduced price of £109.

(Users choosing ii) or iii) will not get access to the web site or other upgrade features of RISC OS Select.)

Existing Users

Existing RISC OS 4 users will be able to join the Select Scheme for one year for £105 (or £99 if they are members of the Foundation.)

If a new purchaser wants to upgrade to RISC OS Select they can do so for £80 instead of the normal £105. This upgrade offer will be available for up to 4 months after the purchase of RISC OS 4 at the full price.

Users of machines that were supplied with RISC OS 4 will only be able to join the Select Scheme at the full price, irrespective of when they purchased their computer.

NB All prices are inclusive of VAT. Overseas subscribers will be charged postage at cost if they wish to receive CD's. They may optionally choose to only receive updates via the Web Site.

Application forms for the RISC OS Select Scheme are available from the RISCOS Ltd Web Site at <http://www.riscos.com/select/>

Registered Developers

Since the formation of RISCOS Ltd the demands of the current software developers have been very varied. In a recent survey of developers most of them indicated that they do not usually need much individual support.

In order to provide full support to those that require it we shall be increasing the fees for Registered Developers to £500 per 6 months as from 1st June 2001. This will entitle them to direct contact with the RISC OS Development team. Developers that only need access to technical documentation will be able to do so by joining the RISC OS Select Scheme.

Anyone that joins the RISC OS Select scheme may also apply to be become an affiliate Registered Developer. There will be no fee for becoming an affiliate and they will be able to use the Registered Developers logo. The Foundation RISC User CD and the RISC OS Products Database Web Site will contain a database of all Registered Developers, and their products. The only requirement for becoming an affiliate and having software included on the database will be that a fully functional version (and any subsequent updates) of the software is supplied to RISCOS Ltd for evaluation and internal use.

End User Support

With immediate effect RISCOS Ltd will no longer be offering technical support for end-users via telephone. Support queries can still be sent to <mailto:support@riscos.com> but there will no guarantee of an individual response.

Where appropriate new answers will be added to the RISC OS Knowledge Base at <http://support.riscos.com/>

Support Web Sites



RISC OS 4

To encourage RISC OS Software development, subscribers to the RISC OS Select Scheme will get access to the documentation and resources about RISC OS 4 previously only provided to Registered Developers at <http://support.riscos.com/>



RISC OS 3

Support for legacy computers and software prior to RISC OS 4 is now available at <http://acorn.riscos.com/> This area also contains the contents of the old Acorn public FTP site along with additional items such as the Acorn Universal Boot application.

RISC OS Internet Suite

Following an agreement with ANT Limited, RISCOS Ltd has now taken over sales and development of the ANT Internet Suite, which will now be known as the RISC OS Internet Suite.

Improvements and bug fixes to other parts of the suite will start to follow over the next few months. This will primarily revolve around converting the ANT Suite to use a new RISC OS Internet Stack. This will include DHCP support for those of you with cable modem Internet access and also converting the ANT Suite to use the RISC OS Choices system which will allow easy change over between settings when different people use the same computer or when a computer is used in multiple locations or with multiple ISP's.

For various reasons we will not be doing any development on the RISC OS Fresco Web Browser, but we shall be making the current version of it available as part of the bundled software with future versions of RISC OS.

The current ANT Suite package is still available with a new reduced price of £49.95 inc VAT (exc delivery) direct from RISCOS Ltd. Purchasers after 1st May will get a free upgrade to the new RISC OS Internet Suite, when it is released.

Current users of the ANT Internet Suite will be able to upgrade to the new RISC OS Internet Suite when it is released later in the year.

ANT Suite / RISC OS Internet Suite Q & A

Q. Will the current ANT Suite still be sold?

A. Yes, until the new RISC OS Internet Suite is available later in the year.

Q. I'm an existing ANT Suite User, what does the new RISC OS Internet Suite offer me?

A. At present there will be no major updates to the Suite, but it will have a number of changes made to its internal structure to allow it to integrate with the new features being planned for the RISC OS Internet Stack. The new stack will provide new features such as BootP and DHCP support. Whilst the new RISC OS Internet Suite will use the standard Internet Stack rather than the having to have a separate stack as at present. The new Suite will also provide support for multi-user choices which is to be a new feature of RISC OS.

Q. How will I get support for using the ANT Suite?

A. Support for using the ANT Suite will be provided by Paul Vigay. RISCOS Ltd will not be able to deal with telephone support enquiries.

There are three levels of support available from Paul:-

Free support

* Available from his web site. <http://www.vigay.com/ant/index.html>

Annual Subscriber Scheme (Email)

* This enables you to submit problems via email, and to receive personalised help with individual problems.

Membership: £45.00 per year (or £25.00 for registered AntUtils users)

Annual Subscriber Scheme (Phone or Email)

* This provides the same level of support as the Email only scheme above, but also allows telephone support between 6.30pm and 9.00pm, with fax support at other times.

Membership: £55.00 per year (or £35.00 for registered AntUtils users)

Q. Will ANT be providing support and updates to the Suite?

A. NO. All queries should be directed to RISCOS Ltd. Please do not contact ANT Limited with any queries, as they will be unable to help you.

Q. How much will the RISC OS Internet Suite cost?

A. As a full package it will be available for £49.95 inc VAT excluding delivery.

Q. What will be included in the RISC OS Internet Suite?

A. The RISC OS Internet Suite will have different components for different markets

The RISC OS Internet Suite will be available in four formats:-

1. As a standalone product for users who do not currently have any internet connection software. This will include all the current components of the ANT Suite.

2. As a part of RISC OS 4 upgrades under the RISC OS Select Scheme or for new purchasers of RISC OS 4.

3. Possibly bundled with new machines supplied by RISC OS manufacturers.

4. As an upgrade for existing users of the ANT Suite and Voyager package who don't subscribe to the RISC OS Select Scheme.

Q. I have looked at the ANT Web Site and it mentions that ANT are still developing Fresco and they have a new email package called Simplemail. In what ways is this new Fresco and Simplemail different from my version and Marcel?

A. The new packages are written for use in the embedded appliances market and are not suitable for use as desktop applications.

Q. I am an overseas user of the ANT Suite. Will I be able to upgrade to the SSL version of RISC OS Fresco?

A. Yes, as long as you are not a resident of a prohibited country such as Iran, Libya, Afghanistan etc.

Printer drivers

We get a lot of queries about Printer Drivers, and I would like to point out that it is simply impossible for RISCOS Ltd to try and provide drivers for every new printer produced.

The reasons for this are threefold:-

1. There are simply too many new models being produced.

2. Many manufacturers just do not want to provide the necessary information for third parties to write drivers.

3. Even if we had the information RISCOS Ltd cannot afford on its own to produce drivers for printers that may only be used by a few people.

Our plan is therefore to try to ensure that the RISC OS printing system is capable of driving as many printers as possible, whilst leaving the actual details of those drivers to third party developers/dealers.

The point to note is that first and foremost we must have access to the necessary information to produce a driver. If any particular manufacturer is not prepared to provide information then it will be very hard for us to provide support.

For instance, while RISCOS Ltd will maintain !Printers and the central driver modules, we expect dealers/developers to take on the responsibility for creating the printer definition files themselves for any printers they wish to sell. No programming knowledge should be required on the part of the dealers, just an ability to use the !PrintEdit application supplied.

!Printers 1.65 will be available shortly.

32 bit RISC OS

There has been considerable debate over the development of 32 bit versions of RISC OS, which were to be called RISC OS 5. Up until January 2001 it had been expected that a 32 bit version of RISC OS would be required to support new processors in a relatively short timespan, since 26 bit processors were expected to have a very limited remaining availability.

At present however RISCOS Ltd does not have any customers who have made any commitment that requires the production of a 32 bit version of RISC OS and it appears that the availability of 26 bit processors will continue for longer than was expected. Consequently all our development resources are being put in to enhancing the features of existing 26 bit RISC OS.

32 bit versions of some parts of RISC OS do exist, and new code is being produced with 32 bit versions in mind but the amount of work needed to convert major areas of RISC OS such as the kernel and ADFS will take many man months of work to complete and until we get sufficient commitment from our customers, that work will not be undertaken. The current 4,000+ users of RISC OS 4 are our first priority and whilst 26 bit machines continue to sell in quantity, desktop versions of RISC OS will remain 26 bit.

It is important to note that much existing software that is written in Assembler cannot be easily converted to run in 32 bit mode and that simply producing a 32 bit version of RISC OS to run on existing hardware, would not offer current users any advantages. So before you decide to ditch your old computer and think about upgrading to a new machine, make sure you fully understand the implications of moving to a new hardware platform. If you haven't already upgraded to RISC OS 4, now is a good time to do it.



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