



QL Assembly Language Mailing List

Issue 8

Norman Dunbar

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Listings



1. Preface

1.1 Feedback

Please send all feedback to assembly@qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk. You may also send articles to this address, however, please note that anything sent to this email address may be used in a future issue of the eMagazine. Please mark your email clearly if you do not wish this to happen.

This eMagazine is created in \LaTeX source format, aka plain text with a few formatting commands thrown in for good measure, so I can cope with almost any format you might want to send me. As long as I can get plain text out of it, I can convert it to a suitable source format with reasonable ease.

I use a Linux system to generate this eMagazine so I can read most, if not all, Word or MS Office documents, Quill, Plain text, email etc formats. Text87 might be a problem though!

1.2 Subscribing to The Mailing List

This eMagazine is available by subscribing to the mailing list. You do this by sending your favourite browser to <http://qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk/maillinglist> and clicking on the link "Subscribe to our Newsletters".

On the next screen, you are invited to enter your email address *twice*, and your name. If you wish to receive emails from the mailing list in HTML format then tick the box that offers you that option. Click the Subscribe button.

An email will be sent to you with a link that you must click on to confirm your subscription. Once done, that is all you need to do. The rest is up to me!

1.3 Contacting The Mailing List

I'm rather hoping that this mailing list will not be a one-way affair, like QL Today appeared to be. I'm very open to suggestions, opinions, articles etc from my readers, otherwise how do I know what I'm doing is right or wrong?

I suspect George will continue to keep me correct on matters where I get stuff completely wrong, as before, and I know George did ask if the list would be contactable, so I've set up an email address for the list, so that you can make comments etc as you wish. The email address is:

assembly@qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk

Any emails sent there will eventually find me. Please note, anything sent to that email address will be considered for publication, so I would appreciate your name at the very least if you intend to send something. If you do not wish your email to be considered for publication, please mark it clearly as such, thanks. I look forward to hearing from you all, from time to time.

If you do have an article to contribute, I'll happily accept it in almost any format - email, text, Word, Libre/Open Office odt, Quill, PC Quill, etc etc. Ideally, a \LaTeX source document is the best format, because I can simply include those directly, but I doubt I'll be getting many of those! But not to worry, if you have something, I'll hopefully manage to include it.



Well now, here's a thing. Very quickly after Issue 7 "hit the streets" I got feedback from two different people. Thanks very much to Wolfgang and to Marcel for their input, and their permission to publish.

2.1 Feedback from Wolfgang Lenerz

[WL] Just a little comment: there is a typo on page 16, in the third code extract at line 1: Tobias makes a MOVEM to ...a2-a7 : it should be to ...a2-a6.

[ND] Thanks. I don't have a Q68 (yet?) and I really didn't have much to do with Tobias's article to get it into the eComic, so I didn't notice that slight error. I fixed it in the PDF download on 1st October 2019 at around 19:00 BST (UTC + 01:00) - so anyone who downloaded prior to that time might wish to download again to get the correction.

[WL] Also a more general comment, which I offer as constructive criticism: in the routine, when handling values over 127 (i.e. at least 2 bytes), why check for the special cases first (arrows, pound etc) before getting the values from the table? Wouldn't it be better to leave their place in the table at 0 as well, and every time you hit a 0 in the table you check for the exception?

[ND] Good point, thanks. That would have made more sense as the processing is more likely to be processing valid characters than the exceptions. I thought I was doing well getting the exceptions in what I thought was the most likely order!

[WL] Oh, and this probably doesn't get said often enough : *really enjoy reading your prose!*

[ND] Thanks. It's nice to get feedback, but much nicer to get compliments.

2.2 Feedback from Marcel Kilgus

[MK] As a pedantic ass I have to object so sentences like these:

The UK Pound symbol is character 96 (\$60) on the QL, but in ASCII it is character 163 (\$A3)" (etc.)

[ND] I like pedants! My wife says I am one, then she corrects me at every available opportunity!

[MK] ASCII is, by definition, 7-bit, so it cannot contain a character with the number 163. The tale of characters 128-255 is one fought in many battles. Linux tended to be "ISO 8859-1" and later "ISO 8859-15" before they adopted UTF-8, on Windows you will mostly find the "Windows-1252" encoding. These are very similar, but differ when it comes to the Euro sign for example (ISO 8859-1 is too old to have a Euro sign and the others have adopted it in different places).

[ND] Technically, I agree, ASCII is indeed 7 bit. But let's face it, there have been 8 bit "ASCII" characters for many years, even when I was at college back in the, ahem, early eighties, ASCII was 8 bit - whether pedantically correct or not. However, true ASCII is 7 bit.

[ND] I remember many occasions, back when `config.txt` was still a thing, trying to set up the correct code page for a system. A nightmare as there was no Google back then to help out, just the manual for whatever system I was installing or working with.

[ND] I am led to understand, however, that ISO/IEC 4873 introduced some extra control codes "characters", in the \$80 to \$9F hexadecimal range, as part of extending the 7-bit ASCII encoding to become an 8-bit system.¹ However, I sit corrected on the 7/8 bit point. Thanks.

[MK] But, and that is the important thing, Unicode was made to unify them all. And UTF-8 is a pretty darn cool invention, unfortunately it came too late for Windows, which was a very early adopter of Unicode at a time when everybody thought "65536 characters ought to be enough for everyone!". So Windows started to use 16-bits for every character ("UCS-2" encoding), which makes coding somewhat weird, and then they found out that 65536 characters are not enough after all, so now Windows uses UTF-16, which is UTF-8's big brother, with sometimes 2 bytes per character and sometimes 4. What a mess. But when it comes to data storage UTF-8 is the way to go these days, always!

[ND] It sure is a mess, and yes, UTF-8 is the way to go. As I mentioned XML files depend on it, the web is pretty much full of it in all those HTML files etc. And, once you get your head around the difference between a "code point" and the character's actual bytes, it's pretty easy to understand.

[ND] I'm not so sure that Windows is missing out or behind the times though. At work, my files are all pretty much UTF-8 (I write my documents in ² format and convert them to PDF files using - if I need Office flavoured docs, I use to convert to something in DOCX format - but I almost never use those.) or are my text editors of choice and both save in UTF-8 with no problems. Even Notepad itself can read the files - and I suspect Windows 10 will be better, I'm on Windows 7. (Currently)

[ND] Mind you, those damned so-called "smart" quotes that Office documents insist on using mess things up truly. It's the first thing I turn off with my Office stuff, and every slight update or patch seems to turn them back on! So annoying.

[MK] For QPC I already implemented these translations 20 years ago when copying text to/from the clipboard. But well done for bringing UTF-8 to the QL

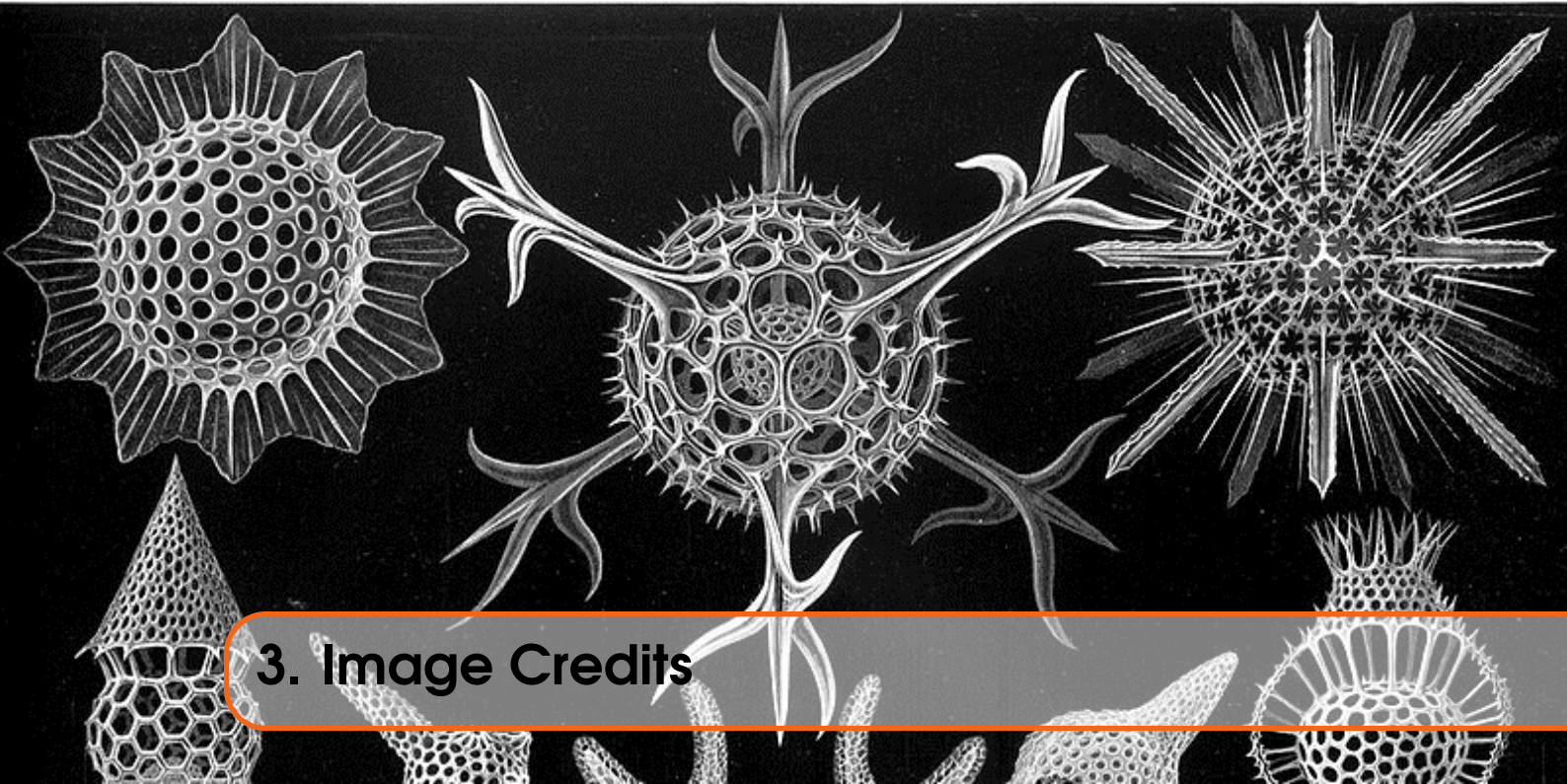
[ND] Well, thanks for the reminder of how old I'm getting! The reason I did the utilities was

¹The Unicode Consortium (October 27, 2006). "Chapter 13: Special Areas and Format Characters" (PDF). In Allen, Julie D. (ed.). The Unicode standard, Version 5.0. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, US: Addison-Wesley Professional. p. 314. ISBN 978-0-321-48091-0. Retrieved March 13, 2015.

²Now that's ironic!

simple, I had one of those itches to scratch. When I did a bit of work with Jan on his updated QL Monitor, I used a Linux system to do the typing - it's what I'm used to - and those arrow characters caused me no end of grief, as did the copyright and the pound signs. I messed about there using actual, ahem, ASCII codes (sorry!) but now, I don't have to.

[ND] Oh, and *thank you* for , it's my favourite QL program of all time, and it simply "just" works on Linux under . I did have some problems recently with it not working, but I traced that to a mix and match installation with bits of and bits of living together in sin. It's what has kept me in the QL scene for as long as I can remember - I always got somewhat tired of the QL, the cables, the hard drive, the noise, the length of table I needed with limited space in my flat (apartment) and so on. With it's all on my laptop. Nice and compact.



3. Image Credits

The front cover image on this ePeriodical is taken from the book *Kunstformen der Natur* by German biologist Ernst Haeckel. The book was published between 1899 and 1904. The image used is of various *Polycystines* which are a specific kind of micro-fossil.

I have also cropped the image for use on each chapter heading page.

You can read about Polycystines on [Wikipedia](#) and there is a brief overview of the above book, also on [Wikipedia](#), which shows a number of other images taken from the book. (Some of which I considered before choosing the current one!)

Polycystines have absolutely nothing to do with the QL or computing in general - in fact, I suspect they died out before electricity was invented - but I liked the image, and decided that it would make a good cover for the book and a decent enough chapter heading image too.

Not that I am suggesting, *in any way whatsoever*, that we QL fans are ancient.