Seiko Smart Label Printer

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Every once in a while, a really useful piece of hardware comes along. The Seiko Smart Label Printer[1] is such a device. The Smart Label Printer is an accessory piece of hardware that produces labels for mailings, storage tubes, or name tags, one at a time, as you need them. It can also produce labels for file folders and Code 39 bar-coded labels. I was used to printing address labels manually or cutting the address out of a copy of the letter and attaching it to the envelope so this label printer is a real advance for me.

Installation of the hardware and software is very simple. The system I reviewed was intended for the IBM PC and compatibles, but the hardware operates just as well with the Macintosh line of computers. The hardware consists of the printer, its power cord, a serial cable, and one roll of 130 labels. The software is provided on both a $3^1/_2$-in. and a $5^1/_4$-in. floppy disk. A 77-page manual, which contains instructions for both IBM and Macintosh computers, is provided with the system. The manual has two useful indexes, one for the IBM computers, the other for the Macintosh machines. The technical notes section of the manual appears to be quite good, but since (fortunately) I have never had to look up an error message, I can't say exactly how helpful it is. Installation of the software is simple; it took no more than a minute or two to get everything up and running. The software is very flexible and contains useful help messages dealing with all parts of the system and accessible by means of function keys. The system runs as a pop-up program and is designed to run as a memory-resident with access via a hot key. If necessary, you can change the key that is designated as "hot".

The program may also be set up to run only with a particular application, such as a word processor. This is the way I chose to do it; the smart label printer runs only when I am in WordPerfect, which is usually the only time I need it. This way, I do not have to worry about the memory it uses when I am in a different, memory-intensive program. The program is loaded only when I access WordPerfect and is automatically unloaded when I quit the word processor.

The smart label program can be instructed to "grab" the information, e.g., a blocked piece of text, that you want to print on the label, and you can then edit it if you wish. Alternatively, you can create labels by typing directly into the system. It is possible to create a list of labels, save it, and recall it whenever you need a specific label. I find this to be really handy for mailings to members of groups and committees with which I am involved. There are two type fonts for IBM computers: Standard and San Serif. As expected, the Macintosh version has several fonts available, including Chicago (defaulting to 12-point), Geneva, Cairo, New York, and so on.

In summary, the Seiko Smart Label Printer is a handy little gadget, reasonably priced at discount computer stores, that any scientist or secretary should find to be a simple and pleasurable time saver to have attached to their PC.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

(1) The Seiko Smart Label Printer, for either the IBM PC/XT/AT, PS/2 or compatible computer, or Macintosh computer, is available from Seiko Instruments Inc., 1144 Ringwood Court, San Jose, CA 95131 (Phone 800-553-5312) for $249.95. Additional boxes of labels are available at $7.99 per box of 2 rolls each carrying 130 labels.

The PC Version of the Mass Spectrometry Bulletin[1]

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The widely used Mass Spectrometry Bulletin (MSB), published in England by the Royal Society of Chemistry has been made into an IBM PC-searchable product. The MSB covers all the aspects of mass spectrometry and related processes with literature coverage that is much broader and in-depth than that from *Chemical Abstracts*. The systems comes with a disk of the search software, and each month a disk of the latest literature references are provided to subscribers.

The equipment needed to run the system is an IBM PC or clone with a minimum memory of 312K main memory. While not specified, I assume it will run under DOS 2.0 and higher versions. The search software incorporates the ASSASSIN PC software.[2] The system requires about 2.5 Mbytes of hard-disk space for the software and one of data. For the entire year of data the requirements are a hefty 25 Mbytes.

The version I received to review included the literature disk for January 1991. Installation was clumsy and old fashioned. With most modern software packages having finally developed user-friendly interfaces, this package is years out of date. After creating the directory for the files, I first copied the two floppy disks of programs and data, then had to manually start up a program to unpack or un-compress the January issue of MSB. To start up the program one must type "ASSASSIN" (why not MSB?). Then the system asks you for a user name and then a password. In spite of these silly obstacles I proceeded onwards. The next step I needed to take was to actually update the system, as the un-compressing of the January issue was just the first step in getting the system ready to search. To