Fontmania!

by Dick Estel

There was little in my background to warn anyone of the danger that I could ever become a fontmaniac.

I grew up in the rural foothills of California in the 40's and 50's. We didn't even have electricity till 1946, so it's a good thing we didn't have Commodore 64's back then.

I became editor of my high school paper, worked on the local weekly for a summer, and wrote for the Daily Collegian when I attended California State University at Fresno. All this time I used a a typewriter, and switched easily from pica to elite with never a thought of bold face or underlining.

The years passed, I served in the National Guard, got a job, got married, had kids, got divorced, got different jobs, became a grandfather, and all was well. Then one day Sears had an ad for a Commodore 64 on special for $179. By day's end I had a disk drive and computer, and by week's end a monitor and printer.

And GEOS.

When GEOS first came out, it had SEVEN DIFFERENT FONTS! This gave the user a wide choice of how a document would look...several different lettering styles, in a number of sizes.

Not long after the beginnings of GEOS, Berkeley Softworks released FontPack I, which contained another 20 or so fonts. This really expanded the capabilities of the program. I became editor of my user group newsletter, and for several months I was perfectly happy with those 27 fonts.

Meanwhile, programmers had been creating font editors that allowed the home user to modify GEOS fonts or create new ones. And the people who obtained the editors began to create fonts with a vengeance; selling them, or uploading them to Q-Link and other on-line services.

About the time I started using geoPublish, I also became a member of Q-Link, and started downloading some of the fonts that had been uploaded. Also at this time I got into a discussion of GEOS with Ken Brown, a member of our user group. He casually mentioned that he had over a hundred fonts. As you can guess, a copying session at my house followed and then I, too, had over a hundred fonts.

Next there was the acquisition of the Run Power Pack, which contained a couple dozen more fonts, plus more and more fonts from Q-Link. Now I had over 200 fonts!

Of course, when you have two hundred fonts, you have no idea what they all look like. So I realized that I needed to make a printout so I could select just the right font for each job. I had started this project before with Paper Clip Publisher, but never carried it out. This time I not only decided to stick with it, but to offer the result to other GEOS users.

The end result is the Font Resource Directory, which I have offered at a modest price to cover printing, mailing and other costs. At the same time my font collection has grown geometrically, to the point where I fear the project will never end.

I had thought at the beginning that I might have a 50-page document. At the present time I have completed 335 pages displaying over 800 fonts. I have about 70 more fonts on hand to be added to the directory. And even as I write this, people are madly creating more GEOS fonts. I know there are around 150 to 200 fonts that I do NOT yet have.

Does anyone really need 800 GEOS fonts? I doubt it...but collecting and cataloging them has been fun and fontastic; and has brought me in touch with GEOS users all over the world—including the powers that be in geoMetrix. Not realizing what crazy things a font-natic might do, they have invited me to write a regular column about fonts for geoJournal. Don't say you weren't warned!

FoNT mANIA!

by Dick Estel

If you've done much collecting of GEOS programs, or have an interest in fonts, you've probably acquired a font editor program along the way. But you may never have used the program.

I am familiar with geoFont, which comes with some of the Berkeley font disks; and Jim Collette's Font Editor (currently at version 2.5). Both editors work in a similar manner, although I believe Font Editor is significantly superior.

There are times that anyone using GEOS can and should use a font editor. Here are four reasons to play with this fascinating GEOS program that you might have overlooked:

to make the font file smaller
to add missing characters
to make special characters
to improve existing characters

MAKING THEM SMALLER

Each GEOS application that allows the use of different fonts has a buffer into which the font file is loaded. The size of the buffer varies between different applications (see Table 1). If the font file is too large for this buffer, the font cannot be used in that program. Although geoPaint gives you a message when the font is too large, geoPublish simply ignores the font.

You will rarely encounter a font that won't work in geoWrite, because most editors limit the size of fonts to approximately the maximum geoWrite buffer size.

Many fonts have unused characters, and if the width of these "blank" characters is more than one pixel, you can reduce them to one pixel width using Font Editor (geoFont has a two-pixel minimum width). You can see the current file size in kilobytes as you work on the font, so you can see when you have reduced it enough.

If reducing blank characters does not bring the font down to size, you may have to eliminate characters. I usually start with rarely used characters, such as those produced

with the Commodore key (' ~ | { } \ ). You could eliminate other punctuation marks and even numbers if you can get by without them. A last resort is splitting the font. This involves duplicating the font under a different name or point size, then eliminating different characters from each file (ending up with A-M and N-Z or some variation).

MISSING CHARACTERS:

Sometimes the problem is sort of the opposite of a font that's too large—missing characters that you want to use. Many font files do not have some or any of the punctuation. Usually this is to keep the font small enough to work in all applications. But sometimes a few characters can be added to a font without exceeding the limit. Again, you can easily check the font's size with the editor to determine if you can add to it.

MAKING SPECIAL CHARACTERS

FONT BUFFER SIZES	
geoPublish	4,096
geoWrite	6,000
geoPaint 64	4,100
geoPaint 128	4,500

Table 1

Commodore neglected to include a cents (¢) key, but many GEOS fonts have some other character defined as ¢. However, you can easily create one, or any other special character you might want. These could include foreign letters or perhaps a special monogram for your initials.

IMPROVING CHARACTERS

This should be fairly obvious...most of us have looked at a font and said, "I could have designed this font better." Well you don't have to design a new one—just fix up the one you already have. I added some extra pixels to the diagonal parts of the W and w in University.

I have also modified fonts to improve spacing. Most GEOS fonts are proportional, but sometimes the spacing does not look right, so you can always add or subtract a pixel width.

While most of us do not have the ability or desire to design a complete font, we can still have a a lot of fun and accomplish a worthwhile purpose tweaking and modifying existing fonts.

In the last issue I mentioned various uses for a font editor. I will not belabor this topic, but I wanted to be give you specific step by step instructions on how to go about accomplishing one of the ideas I offered.

I will refer to Font Editor 2.5 by Jim Collette. This is my favorite editor of the ones I am familiar with. Most of them work on the same general principles and the information can be adapted to other editors. In addition, everything I will describe can be accomplished with the public domain version of the editor, 2.2.

Suppose you have a nifty font that is too large to work in geoPublish. The first method to reduce the size of a font file is to eliminate unwanted characters. You can check the size in kilobytes of the file in the info box (click on the file; press C=q), but this will give the total size of **all** points. When using an application program, only the size of the individual point file matters. The geoPublish font buffer has a maximum size of 4096K, so if a single-point font file shows 5K or more, it will not work.
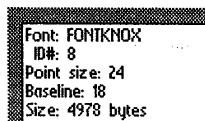
```
Font: FONTKNOX
ID#: 8
Point size: 24
Baseline: 18
Size: 4978 bytes
```
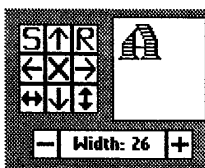**Figure 1**

Figure 2
Width: 26

A better approach is to load the font into the editor and select the point size you would like to use. The font editor will display the size of that point size only (figure 1). Now decide what characters you can do

geos file options edit
Undo
Char: $41   **New width? (1-48)**
1
Cancel
Width

Figure 3

without. Usually I have little use for things like # & ' ~ } % & {.

Pressing any key will bring that character up in the editing box, and will also show its width (figure 2). Click on the word WIDTH and you will get a dialogue box requesting the new width (figure 3). Enter 1 and press return. In a few seconds the character in the display box will be reduced to one pixel width. I advise clicking on the CLEAR icon (figure 4) so that you will not have a "garbage" character in case that key gets pressed. When the width is reduced, you will see the font file size figure go down. Repeat the above steps until the size is under 4096K.

Figure 4

Now it is time to save your modified font. It is a good idea to save it under a different name so that you will still have the original font for use in geoWrite if needed. You might also want to create a separate file that keeps the characters you eliminated and gets rid of some others.

Since you probably will not use the old and new versions of the font together, it is not necessary to change the ID number, but you can do this if you want. Remember if you have both the old and new versions on the same disk with identical ID numbers, GEOS will use the FIRST one on the disk.

Select any number from 1 to 1024 for the ID. Then click on FILE, followed by SAVE. You will see a series of dialogue boxes, which should be answered as follows:

POINT SIZE: Can be any size, but the true point size is shown as the default
FILENAME: Oldname2
FILE CLASS: Font Editor
VERSION: 2.x
(Any entry you can think up, or no entry at all, will work for these last two items.)

I have used this method many times in order to use a nice font that geoPublish would otherwise not recognize. It's a simple but enjoyable project that will give you some ideas on how to work with a font editor.
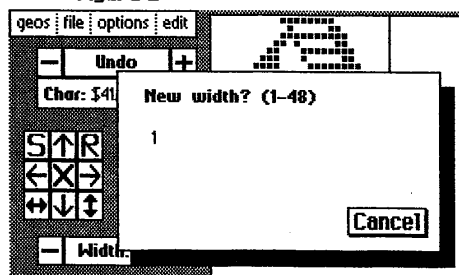
FoNTmANIA!

by Dick Estel

How many GEOS fonts are enough? For most purposes 30 or 40 should be plenty. But for some of us, the only possible answer is "all of them!" Those who admit to the dread disease of fontmania will never be satisfied if there is an uncollected font out there somewhere. Here's where to find more fonts to feed your addiction.

Hundreds of fonts are available on Quantum Link and other on-line services. All have a charge for the time spent downloading. A 5-minute mega-font download on Q-Link will cost you 40 cents. Bulletin boards all over the country also have fonts, and most private BBS's do not charge for downloading (nearly all require a certain ratio of uploading to downloading, however).

The following are commercial sources of fonts:

GEOWORKS (formerly BSW): Five fonts are provided with the original GEOS system disk; and a number of megafonts come with geoPublish. GEOS 2.0 also comes with laser fonts, identified by the prefix LW. GeoWorks also sells Font Pack I, Font Pack Plus and International FontPack. Many of GeoWorks fonts are available on Q-Link.

DALE BEACH: A monthly cartoon disk, each one including a font, is available for $7. 7048 Michigan Street, Elwell MI 48832.

BRUCE GILSON: Font Collection 1 – Includes 30 fonts by Bruce and Jim Collette's Font Editor 2.4 for $21.50. Font Collection 2 is the same price and includes new fonts and the upgraded Font Editor 2.5. MegaFont Disk 1 - $16.50. Comm-Plex Software, 6782 Junction Road, Pavilion NY 14525-9755.

BRODY KOGA: 1 disk, $6. 3251 S 176th #205, Seattle WA 98188.

SUSAN LAMB: Various disks of fonts and artwork are available. Write for details, look for her ads in geoWorld, or leave EMail to YumaLamb on Q-Link. 3575 E County 18th Street, Yuma AZ 85365.

LOADSTAR: Fonts are available on several Loadstar disks. Softdisk Publishing, P.O. Box 30008, Shreveport LA 71130-0008. Three-month and one-year subscription available.

JOE BUCKLEY (Red Storm on Q-Link): Storm Disk 1 contains three fonts and a number of utility programs, including the latest version of Wrong is Write and Joe Buckley's font editor, Font Monster. Send $20 to Storm Systems, 464 Beale Street, West Quincy MA 02169.

RUN MAGAZINE: Geos Power Pak I and II; and RUN's GEOS COMPANION all contain a number of fonts, as well as graphics and programs. $19.97 for I or II; $39.94 for both; $24.97 for GEOS COMPANION. 80 Elm Street, Peterborough NH 03458; Phone 1-800-343-0728.

TT GRAFIX: Four disks of fonts are available at $6.95 each. Tom Treverrow, 326 Clothier Spring Road, RD 1, Malvern PA 19355-9657.

SUZART FONTS: 150 16-point pictographs; 26 borders and ornaments; see inside back cover of GeoWorld #23 for a display of these fonts. $12.50 each; 2 for $18. Box 410852, San Francisco CA 94141-0852.

IKE RIEHL: $24.95 for a disk of approximately 20 fonts. P.O. Box 1509, Burleson TX 76028, 817-295-5806.

In addition there are a number of sources providing public domain font disks at a modest charge for those who can't or don't want to download them. These include:

Dick Estel, Font Resource Directory, 3487 E Terrace, Fresno CA 93703; 5 disks at $3 each; leave EMail to DickE on Q-Link for more information.

Thomas F. Trocco, Kids Computer News, c/o St. Hilda's and St. Hugh's School, 619 West 114th Street, New York NY 10025; 18 disks of public domain GEOS fonts, $4 per disk; plus clip art and many other items. Request the latest edition of the GEOS handbook.

PARSEC, Inc: 23+ single-sided disks, $1 each; P.O. Box 111, Salem MA 01970-0111.

With a few dollars, and/or a few dozen hours of downloading time, you can easily have more GEOS fonts that you can possibly use!

(This information does NOT constitute an endorsement. Accuracy of prices and addresses not guaranteed)

FoNT mANIA!
by Dick Estel

How would you like to overcome the seven-font limit imposed by the GEOS system? With a little time and a font editor, you can have access to as many as 49 fonts!

GEOS can use only the first seven fonts on a disk. After I had been producing my user group newsletter with GEOS for several months, I realized that this limit was a major time waster. I would print one page, then move needed fonts to the beginning of the disk, print another page, and so on.

The key to getting around this problem is the fact that each point size is stored as a separate file as far as GEOS applications are concerned. The point size selected is loaded into the application font buffer as needed. The system does not care a whit if the dot patterns in the individual files are similar or even recognizable as letters. Nor does it care what the real point size is. This means that a font with seven point sizes can actually be seven different fonts, and they could conceivably all be the same point size.

The trick is to save the seven fonts together under one name, each with a different "cosmetic" point size. The system will use the TRUE point size. In order to accomplish this using Jim Collette's Font Editor, follow these simple steps:

1. Copy the desired fonts (up to seven) to a work disk along with the Font Editor.

2. Open the editor, and open the desired font and point size.

3. Change the ID number by clicking on the number in the lower left part of the screen. Enter any number up to 1024.

4. Click on FILE, then SAVE. Select CREATE NEW FONT.

Please Select Save Option:

Open – save under existing font

Create – create a new font file

Cancel – don't save yet

You can save it under the true point size. You will then be prompted for a file name, and the old name will be displayed. Delete it and enter a new name.

5. Close the file, and open the next font you want to include in your new multi-font.

6. Click on FILE, then SAVE. Select SAVE UNDER EXISTING NAME. The TRUE point size will be displayed as the default. If this font is the same size as your first one, you must select and enter a dummy point size or your first font will be overwritten.

7. You will then see a listing of all fonts on the disk. Select the name of your NEW multi-font.

Filename: GEOMETRIX

On disk: RAM 1581

Disk   **Drive**   **Cancel**

Width:
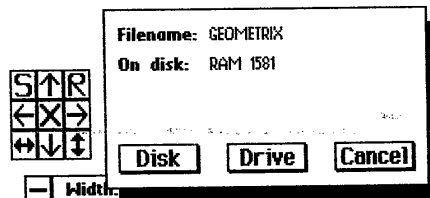
8. Repeat steps 5, 6 and 7 for each additional font you wish to add.

Be sure to write down the dummy point size, the font name, and the true point size for reference. It's a good idea to make a printout of the font for future guidance. This multi-font will work normally in geoPaint and geoWrite, although some individual point sizes may be too large for geoPaint. When using the font with geoPublish you will have to select the exact dummy point size you want. If you attempt to scale the font by selecting other point sizes, you have no control over which actual font the system will select.

To prepare for and illustrate this article I compiled a seven-font file I titled geoMetrix. It has been given to the editor on disk, and I am sure he would be happy to provide members with a copy to look at as an example.

The GEOS system as it comes out of the box is wonderful, but it has a lot of limitations. Part of the fun of the program is finding ways to overcome those constraints.

FONTMANIA!
by Dick Estel

COPING WITH FONT ID NUMBERS

(A slightly different version of this article originally appeared in GeoWorld Magazine)

We have millions of people in the world, but relatively few names by which we are identified. To get around this, the government and most of the businesses we deal with identify us by a unique number. Even so, duplications sometimes occur in error.

The same problem can exist in the GEOS world when an application calls for a font. Although the programmers at Berkeley Softworks identified fonts by number, nothing was done to prevent assignment of duplicate ID numbers. And since the maximum font ID number is decimal 1023, duplication is inevitable as the number of fonts increases. (I have encountered fonts with higher ID numbers that work fine, but most font editors will not accept a higher number.)

The situation was made worse by the method used by the geoFont program, which shows only the low byte (last two digits) of the four-digit hexadecimal ID number. This forced font designers using this program to assign a number between 0000 and 00FF, which translates to 0 to 255 in decimal. Thus four or five hundred fonts were created using only the first 255 available ID numbers.

Most of the time the end user could care less what the font ID number is. You click on the desired font name, and that's what you get. But if you have two fonts with the same ID number on your disk, GEOS will use the first one, regardless of what you had in mind.

Here are some suggestions to deal with the problems relating to font numbers: If you are creating fonts, use decimal ID numbers of 300 and above. This will greatly reduce the chances of duplication, although there are many fonts with these numbers. At least you can avoid using numbers like 00AD (173) which has been used at least 15 times or 0068 (104) which shows up six times in my collection. Also don't use 400, 500 or 1000, which have been assigned to a large number of fonts. By the way, you CAN'T assign an ID number higher than 00FF (255) with geoFont, since it will only accept two characters.

For users who have two favorite fonts with the same number, simply use a font editor or an ID edit program to change the ID number. After all, even when you have over 1,000 fonts available, as I do, you probably will use only a dozen or so for most of your work. The early version of Jim Collette's Font Editor (2.2) is available on Q-Link. Although it does not have all the features for creating and editing fonts that are found in the later commercial versions, it is certainly adequate for changing ID numbers. There is also an ID edit program on Q-Link that runs from BASIC.

The problem with ID number duplication has gone on too long to be undone. The best solution is to be aware of it, and have the tools to change ID numbers where necessary.
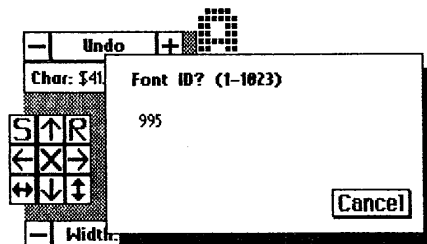
**Change ID numbers with
Jim Collette's Font Editor**

SOMETHING ELSE:

I'm looking for ideas for this column. What would YOU like to know about fonts? Write me at 3487 E Terrace, Fresno CA 93703 or leave EMail to DickE on Q-Link.

Robert A. Stanley, 1412 Carmel Blvd., Zion, IL 60099, is offering his "Hot Fonts" disk for $8. Two very nice sample fonts have been uploaded to Q-Link:

Der Aaterland – An old
German Style font

RSVP – A Script font

Fontmania!

by Dick Estel

THE FONT AWARDS

At last, the long-awaited announcement of the Fontmaniac's FONT AWARDS—which are the best GEOS fonts?

Obviously, the purpose a font will be used for affects which one is best. For straight text with a normal two-pass driver, I have not been able to find anything that is better than BSW's University 10 point, which is what is used for most of this column.

Lately I have been using a 9-point font called Ed Font, which came from Storm Systems Disk 1 by Red Storm (aka Joe Buckley). When printed with the EPSON 8-pin 3 pass driver, this font has a very professional, letter quality look. This driver is available on Q-Link and in many user group libraries, and should work with any printer that can be set for Epson emulation. I set this paragraph in Ed Font, but since I don't know what kind of printer or driver will be used, I don't know if the result will be the same as I have experienced.

When I was editing my user group newsletter, I settled on several fonts for headlines. I made the most use of these three:

Sather 20 point

(BSW's Font Pack Plus)

Smedley 24 point

(a Susan Lamb font from Run Power Pack 1)

Sangamon 24 point

(from Complex Software's Font Collection 2 by Bruce Gilson)

For a "fancy" font I like these:

Scioto

(also from Complex 2)

Pilfman

(created by Dale Beach aka CartoonKid on Q-Link)

Bonanza

(by Susan Lamb from Run PP 1)

I use this one a lot for signs.

For the overall best designed collection, I nominate William Dively, who has uploaded around 30 large fancy fonts under the name Starman35. These fonts include:

BRICKS

TABLED

CHOO CHOO

BACKSTRIPE

Playbill   HEADERETTE

WORDSONG

Finally a special award for my favorite icon. Font designers naturally like to design a special icon to identify their fonts. My favorite is this one, by Marge Reid of Washington State, who has uploaded a half dozen very nice fonts under the name MargeR3.

There you have it—out of a thousand fonts in my collection, some of those that stand out.