PRINTER LIGHTNING
A Print Spooler for the Color Computer 3
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Introduction

Let's face it - printing can be a drag. Your computer is tied up
while your printer slowly churns out a program listing, graphics
dump, or anything else. Wouldn't it be nice if you could work on
your computer while it printed?

Introducing PRINTER LIGHTNING from ColorVenture. Printer
Lightning is the fastest, most reliable print spooler for the
Color Computer. It uses the extra memory in your CoCo 3 to store
items sent to the printer, then prints them out while freeing
your CoCo 3 for other purposes. It will also work with the
ColorVenture RAMDISK if you have 512k, allowing you to have two
disk drives in memory in addition to the print spooler!

Unlike many other print spoolers, Printer Lightning is fast.
You'll hardly notice a slowdown in your computer when you use it,
and it never misses a character. Plus, you'll have over 44K to
use as a buffer in a 128K machine, or over 437K with a 512K CoCo
3. This means you could submit roughly 200 pages of text to be
printed - and still use your computer for serious work!

Loading the program

With your CoCo 3 and disk drive turned on, put the program disk
in drive 0. Type: LOADM"PRINTER":EXEC and then press <Enter>.
Once printer lightning is installed, you can take the disk out of
the drive. It will remain installed in memory unless you turn off
the computer, reset the computer, or load in a program which
conflicts with the memory used by Printer Lightning (for example,
Color Max 3 or BASIC Freedom).

Next, Printer Lightning will ask you if you wish to "Use Hi-Res
Memory." Answering "Y" will give you a bigger buffer, but means
that you cannot use the CoCo 3's graphic screens. Answering "N"
lets you use all CoCo 3 graphics, but gives a smaller buffer.

If you have 512k, Printer Lightning will ask you if you are using
the ColorVenture RAMDISK. If so, it will leave room for two
RAMDISKs. You'll get a smaller buffer, but can also use two
RAMDISKs at the same time you have a print spooler.

Printer Lightning then asks what baud rate you would like to use.
The baud rate is the speed at which the computer transmits
information to the printer. The faster the baud rate, then, the
more efficiently your printer and Printer Lightning can talk, and
the better. You may need to set a switch on your printer or
printer interface, or try different ones. We recommend using the
higest baud possible. If your printer prints "garbage", it means
your baud rate is set incorrectly. Try a different one.

Finally, Printer Lightning asks if you wish to have linefeeds sent to the printer after a carriage return. In most cases, the answer will be No. Some printers, however, need linefeeds or they will print lines over each other. Answer Yes if this is the case, or if you wish to have your printer double space the output. Always answer No if you are printing graphics.

When the OK prompt returns, Printer Lightning is installed, and you may use the computer normally.

If you wish to change any of the settings, or if you wish to clear out the print buffer without printing everything you've sent to it, EXECute the program again. This will get rid of anything lined up for the printer and let you reconfigure Printer Lightning.

Using Printer Lightning

Printer Lightning takes none of BASIC's memory. All data which is sent to the printer through the standard print vector (i.e. the PRINT#-2 command, LLIST command, or Assembly Language equivalent) will be sent to Printer Lightning. Depending on the amount of information, this may take a couple of seconds. When the OK prompt returns (or the program you are using says it is done printing), you may continue to use your computer for something else, while Printer Lightning prints your information.

Note that since high speed disrupts the baud rate, Printer Lightning automatically changes your computer back to normal speed when it has anything to print. This insures that the data is printed reliably.

Also, since Printer Lightning uses interrupts, it is not recommended that you use it while using another program that also uses interrupts, as the two may disrupt each other. (For example, CoCo Max 2 and the ColorVenture Hi-Res Driver are two programs that use interrupts - they may cause characters to become garbled when run at the same time that Printer Lightning is printing.)

Compatability

Printer Lightning will work with anything that uses the standard print vector. Many graphic/screen dump programs use this, as do other utilities. Printer art, long LLISTings of BASIC programs, and many others will work with Printer Lightning, saving you a tremendous amount of time. What formerly tied up your computer for 15 minutes now ties it up for only a few seconds. With a 512K CoCo 3, you can also send many items to be printed in succession, then continue working (or playing) while they are printed.

A little trick for most printers: if you wish to send multiple items to be printed at once, you might try typing (from BASIC): PRINT#-2,CHR$(12) <enter> between each item. This tells many printers to go to the top of the page, and can be used to space

out your items. Note that to the printer, the top of the page is the position when you turned it on.

All BASIC programs should be compatible with Printer Lightning, as should many machine language programs. However, those programs that use the 64K mode and rewrite BASIC's print vector, or use their own, such as many 64K word processors, probably will not be compatible.

We suggest you try Printer Lightning with your favorite programs. If anything gets hung, simply hit reset, or hold down CTRL+ALT+RESET, then hit reset for a cold start.

A quick note to game addicts - you can play your favorite adventures, including Infocom's, while Printer Lightning prints! (Just don't use the SCRIPT command.) Printer Lightning is compatible with many more games, too. So, instead of waiting while your computer prints, you can send a large volume of material to it, then have some fun! (Be careful of games that use interrupts, though, as they may cause some characters to be garbled.)

Disclaimer

ColorVenture licenses Printer Lightning on an "as-is" basis, with no warranties implied or explicit. There is no guarantee that it will work with any specific program, and it is up to the user to determine the suitability of Printer Lightning for his particular task. ColorVenture shall not be liable for any loss of information or problems of any sort that result from the use of this program.

Your Printer Lightning diskette is provided by the dealer that sold it to you. Different dealers may have different terms for replacement and/or help. If you have a problem with printer Lightning, please contact the dealer who sold it to you for assistance.

An Invitation

ColorVenture, the fastest growing CoCo 3 software development company has great opportunities for Assembly Language programmers and artists. Or, we can market your program for you! If you have a program, or are interested in programming opportunities, please write to us at: ColorVenture, 11 Prospect Drive South, Huntington Station, NY 11746.