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The Torch

Welcome!

Let your computer teach you about your computer! The Torch is a tutorial program which runs on any Amstrad computer equipped with a disc drive, and explains all about that wonderful word 'CP/M'. The Torch is straightforward to use and very easy to start, but before we look at all that we must mention a few technical details.

The Torch is a CP/M product, which means that it is designed to run under the CP/M operating system, but we cannot provide the operating system on the same disc as licensing arrangements do not allow us. We supply what is referred to in the Amstrad manuals as a 'Vendor format' disc.

The upshot of all this is that you cannot simply put The Torch disc into your drive and type |CPM to load the operating system and start the program. You need to use your own system disc to start CP/M, then you may run The Torch.

Users of CPC6128 and PCW8256 machines must also remember to start CP/M 2.2, not CP/M Plus. This is because The Torch program uses special features of the Amstrad computers (such as graphics and colour) which are not supported under CP/M Plus.

Starting The Torch

When you purchased your computer (or disc interface if you own a CPC464) you were supplied with some discs. The manual recommended that you back up each of these discs, which means you must have a disc labelled 'CP/M 2.2' or something similar. This is the one you need to run The Torch.

Reset the machine by pressing [CONTROL], [SHIFT] and [ESC] simultaneously and insert the CP/M 2.2 disc into drive A. This will be the only drive if you are using a one-drive system. Now type

```
|cpm
```

and press [RETURN]. After a short while, CP/M 2.2 will have 'booted' and the familiar prompt

```
A>
```

will have appeared.

Once you have your machine running CP/M 2.2, insert the disc supplied into the drive (ensuring side 1 of the disc is uppermost) and type

```
torch1 [RETURN]
```

at the CP/M prompt. From thereonin, everything is explained as you go along.

Both sides of the supplied disc contain The Torch program, but as there is so much information to present, each side contains a slightly different version. Torch1, on side 1 of the disc, explains about CP/M in general and omits descriptions of the special programs provided by Amsoft. Torch2, found on side 2 of the disc, is much the same but describes the Amsoft utilities rather than the CP/M 'transient' commands (such as PIP and ED). We recommend that you start using The Torch from side 1.

The Wand Disc Menu System

As an 'added extra', you'll find that there are another two files on your Torch disc called WAND.COM and MENU.OVR. Together these files provide a comprehensive menu-driven disc management utility. The files must be copied onto each disc that you want to be managed, and it must be noted that The Wand requires CP/M 2.2 to run. The files may be copied with the FILECOPY utility provided by Amsoft:

```
FILECOPY WAND.COM  
FILECOPY MENU.OVR
```

or with PIP if you have two disc drives. The files should be copied only to system discs, where a system disc is one from which you may start CP/M. This is because The Wand can automatically be run each time CP/M is booted from that disc once it has been installed. This means that once you have The Wand on your discs, starting CP/M from them automatically invokes your own disc menu!

It is important to remember that The Wand may be used only with CP/M 2.2. Users of CP/M Plus should ensure that they do not try to run The Wand while running CP/M Plus.

Using The Wand

The Wand allows you to circumvent some of the least convenient parts of CP/M, such as having to type command lines with convoluted arguments and logging in new discs when you need to change media. It allows you to select a number of programs which may be spread across many discs, and then run any of the programs simply by pressing one key.

As The Wand can be started automatically whenever you start CP/M from a disc containing the requisite files, you may set up the menu

selections to enable any of your most popular programs to be started easily. Although usage is fairly straightforward, we'll go through an example to clarify things.

First of all, prepare a CP/M 2.2 **System Disc** by formatting a blank disc. This may be achieved by running the DISCKIT2 utility (NOT DISCKIT3!) supplied by Amsoft, or using the FORMAT program.

Now copy the two Wand files

WAND.COM MENU.OVR

onto your newly-created system disc using the Amsoft FILECOPY utility (you may use PIP if you have more than one drive). Make a list on a handy piece of paper of the programs you want to include in your menu system and then enter The Wand by typing

WAND [RETURN]

at the CP/M A> prompt.

After the program has initialised itself, you'll see the first menu screen appear with option 'a' highlighted. This option should be 'Change MENU entries' or something similar. Experiment selecting options by pressing the [TAB] key, but don't press [RETURN] just yet.

You'll notice that the '<' and '>' keys move you between screens 0 and 1, and that [TAB] moves you between options on the screen. The yellow highlighting band shows which option is the current option, and pressing [RETURN] will cause this choice to be executed. So, move the highlighting band back to the 'Change MENU entries' option by pressing [TAB] the requisite number of times, and then press [RETURN] to execute this option.

After a short while the same screen will return, but if you look closely you'll see that there are a couple of differences. The first is that the screen now has the words 'EDIT MODE' on the right-hand side. The second is that a new option character has appeared, '*'. This new character allows you to edit an individual entry. Press it.

A new screen appears with spaces for your entries. Each edit affects only the option which was highlighted before you pressed '*'. First, you are asked for the name of the program to be run. This can be any valid CP/M filename, remembering that the extension is not to be specified. All CP/M transient commands have the '.COM' extension. All eight characters of the name must be entered, so if the filename is less than eight characters long, use the space bar to skip the blanks left. This takes you to the next entry, which is the command line expected by the program. The command line can be any sequence of text, but remember that it is passed to the program whose name you just typed in. Not all programs need command lines, and of course some need arguments which differ from invocation to invocation. Don't include programs of this sort (things like PIP, ED, GEN80 and so on) on a Wand menu.

The next entry is the menu text which will appear when The Wand starts up. Again, you may type anything you like here, as it is purely for your own use. This text is shown by The Wand as the program description. The last two boxes to be filled in relate to the drive being used by the program (this will usually be A), and whether you need to change discs before the program may be loaded. This would be 'Y' (for 'yes') if the program resides on a different disc to the one containing this Wand menu.

When each option box has been filled in, press [RETURN]. This saves all the details you have entered on the disc, and returns you to the normal Wand menu screen, still in EDIT MODE. Other menu choices may now be added, altered or removed as required. As you're going to need to leave The Wand from time to time, ensure that you leave a 'EXIT' and return to

'SYSTEM' option somewhere on the menu.

When you've made all the changes you've wanted, use the 'Exit to system' option to return to CP/M. To see if everything works as you expected, reset the machine (by pressing [CONTROL], [SHIFT] and [ESC] simultaneously) and boot up CP/M from this new disc. Depending on circumstances, The Wand will start automatically, or you may need to type

WAND [RETURN]

at the prompt before it runs. When it has started you'll see all your selections ready to be chosen from the menu. You may alter any of these any time you like, of course, and the selections do not need to reside on the same disc as The Wand so long as you ensure that you have included the 'P' (Pause) option in the selection's edit screen.

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