

Distribution on 3.5 inch diskettes: a consultation document

INTRODUCTION

This is a bulletin announcing a proposal for TIS Software to distribute software and zaps on higher capacity 3½ inch diskettes than we currently do. It is not an **announcement** of a change in policy; it is a **consultation document** so that we can gauge the feeling amongst our customers for our proposals.

The advantages of the change are as follows:

- For users of 3½" media: the reduced number of diskettes needed for a module means that you will be able to install software more quickly and more easily; we will be able to generate software for you more quickly and easily.
- For all users: the increased capacity of autozaps diskettes will mean that we can include more fixes on one diskette.

The proposals could cause some inconvenience to any resellers with very old 3½" computers which do not support higher capacity diskettes. This possible downside to the proposal is the reason for the consultative nature of this bulletin.

There is no downside to these proposals for those users who receive software on 5¼" diskettes.

BACKGROUND

3½" diskettes were introduced in about 1983. The first computer that ran Global with 3½" media was the Apricot PC; however the IBM PS/2 made the media popular worldwide. The reliability of 3½" diskettes has made them the most popular distribution medium for small and mid-range computers. The capacity of 3½" media has increased over the years. TIS Software has kept step with this increase. The formats are described in the following table. Please note that **x** represents the letter A, B or C which specifies the exact details of the Global directory on the diskette. See pages 136 and 137 of issue 13 of the handbook for full details:

N1x	single-sided; 135 tpi; 9 512-byte sectors per track; 70 tracks. Capacity 300 Kb.
B3x	double-sided; 135 tpi; 9 512-byte sectors per track; 80 tracks. Capacity 700 Kb.
O2x	double-sided; 135 tpi; 18 512-byte sectors per track; 80 tracks. Capacity 1.4 Mb.
V2x	double-sided; 135 tpi; 36 512-byte sectors per track; 80 tracks. Capacity 2.8 Mb.

Since the mid-1980s most, if not all, computers have supported B3x or higher capacity. Since the late 1980s most, if not all, computers have supported O2x or higher capacity. In 1990 we changed from distributing software on N1x to B3x. Now is the time to change from distributing on B3x to O2x. Later in the decade we may propose changing from distributing on O2x to V2x.

PROPOSAL – DISTRIBUTION MEDIA

We propose to convert all those configurations which currently specify distribution of software on format B3B to specify distribution on format O2A. We would make this change on the weekend of the 28th to 30th August 1993.

If feedback from this bulletin justifies it, we will create some new configuration numbers which are similar to existing configurations but will specify distribution on B3B. Such configurations would only be available until late 1994 and supported only until late 1995.

The result of the change should be that unless we were to hear from the reseller that a particular user needed to continue to have distribution on B3B then future software would be distributed on O2A. Assuming we finalise and announce this policy via a bulletin later this month (June), we would distribute forms to resellers with the bulletin to indicate which users' configuration numbers should be changed to continue to allow distribution on B3B.

PROPOSAL – AUTOZAPS

With the removal of formats C10A and R19A from the list of valid Autozap formats in December 1993, B3B is the only stumbling block to a capacity of 1 Mb for all autozaps. We are therefore keen to drop B3B from the list of autozaps formats as soon as possible.

We will introduce O2A as an autozaps format from 31st August 1993. Of course, the autozaps format for a user defaults to the distribution format for that user. So those users for whom no notification (of the need for distribution on B3B) has been received will receive autozaps on O2A from September 1993.

B3B will remain a valid format for autozaps until 31st August 1994. However, if, from January 1994 we start to distribute more bug-fixes on autozaps than we have been doing we will not attempt to include such information on B3B diskettes.

WHAT TO DO NOW

If you have any feedback on this bulletin, please submit it to Martin Procter at the city office by Monday 14th June. If you know of configurations for which it may become necessary to provide new configurations (see second paragraph of this page) please indicate this to Martin. There is no need to provide full details of users yet – you will get this chance once this policy is finalised and announced in a subsequent bulletin.