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Letters

Amused?

I was *not* amused to read the letter by Andy Mickel of Apollo Computer in the 2/4/84 issue. None of the claims made by Mr. Mickel are true; most of them are absurd. If Mr. Mickel is biased in favor of a relatively obscure and difficult language like Pascal, that's his problem. But he should *not* offer his prejudiced opinions as facts.

John Sachland
Pilot Rock, Ore.

I was amused by Andy Mickel's dismissal of BASIC as "unreadable... and impossible to verify as correct."

I have just finished delivering to a client three programs in Data/BASIC at a cost of 33 cents per line of code, for 2,189 lines of code. The programs digest 45,000 records, detailing them by warehouse, by seller, by customer, by product group and customer group. The reports summarize at each break all the lower level breaks.

Data/BASIC, which runs under the Pick [TM] Operating System, possesses all of the control structures required to write superb programs:

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Cover: This is a false color image of an optical illusion. The image of a single quasar is here supposed to be doubled by a gravitational lens. (Photo courtesy MMTO/Smithsonian Institution-Univ. of Ariz.)
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Loops, ifs, and Cases are all handled with dispatch. The variable names can be meaningful names (WHSE is the variable I used for the warehouse number), and paragraph numbers are independent of specific lines of code in the program.

While I concede that most people don't use the BASIC I use, Data/BASIC can perform circles around Pascal and all the other current "remedies" for the original basic deficiencies in the Darmouth Language.

Coupled with the most modern relational data base management operating system currently available, the languages (Data/BASIC, English and Proc) of the Pick [TM] Operating System constitute the fourth generation operating system most users are looking for. Tell Andy that the future is now.

Dr. C. David Fischer Jr.
Data Images, Inc.
Phoenix, Ariz.

Depression information

A news item, "Changing Ideas in Depression" (SN: 1/28/84, p. 58), correctly underscores the fact that cognitive therapy and chemotherapy can affect the organism in the same way, namely

producing improvements in cognitive functioning. Rather than attributing the findings to the *interaction* of psychological and physiological processes, we can postulate that the two forms of treatment affect the same *system*, namely the information processing system. Thus, cognitive deviations and biochemical deviations represent different perspectives of the same phenomenon. Consequently, the successful cognitive or biochemical intervention is bound to affect the brain in similar ways. I think that the findings support other findings in the literature suggesting that the "site of action" of drugs (as well as cognitive therapy) is the information processing system—not the "mood centers of the brain."

Aaron T. Beck, M.D.
University Professor of Psychiatry
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pa.

Ed.'s note: Aaron T. Beck is the author of the widely used Beck Depression Inventory and was a pioneer in the development of cognitive therapy.



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