CHAT version 1.0

a multi-user chat program for Novell Netware.

USER MANUAL

Introduction

What is Chat?

Chat is a program to allow people to "chat" across a Novell network. Messages you enter are broadcast across the network and anybody who is "listening" will receive the message. Any number of people attached to the same network can chat. Unlike many such programs, Chat does not require that all its users be logged into the same file server; in fact, it is not even required that users be logged into any file server as long as the IPX protocol is available.

System requirements

Chat requires a IBM PC compatible machine running DOS 3.0 or later (or an OS/2 2.x DOS box), attached to a Novell network. This version has been tested with Netware 2.15C, 2.2 and 3.1, and 4.01. Approximately 300 K of free DOS memory is required to run the program.

Chat will detect DesqView, Windows 3.1 in enhanced mode, or OS/2 2.x and give up timeslices when it is run under any of these systems, thus keeping the load on the system minimal.

Technical Support

If you have problems or questions about Chat, you can reach me (the author) via Internet e-mail, Compuserve or US Mail. Internet mail is preferred as it is checked daily; however, this account is provided by my employer, so if mail bounces, you can assume that I no longer have the account. Compuserve mail is checked approximately once a month, but the account is not going away any time soon, so use this if all else fails.

Internet:	kevin@elvis.wicat.com
Compuserve:	72500,3705 (NB: Internet users can use 72500.3705@compuserve.com)
US Mail:	175 O Street Salt Lake City, Utah, 84013

Legalisms

After using Chat for thirty days, you must register it as described below in order to go on using it.

Chat is provided as-is. I believe it to be free of harmful bugs, but I will not take responsibility for any damage caused by using this product. I am not a lawyer (obviously), but I hope the spirit of this paragraph is clear. If Chat formats your hard drive, I'm very sorry, and will do my best to fix the bug, but you're on your own. (there are two lessons to learn here: first, keep backups!; and second, always test new software on an isolated system where it cannot damage critical data).

Note that Chat is not crippled in any way; what you see is what you get. Registering this program gives you three benefits: one, a happy conscience; two, the knowledge that you are improving my domestic life (since my wife believes I've been wasting my time writing this program); and three, free upgrades to any future version of this program.

And a brief plea; the purpose of shareware is "try before you buy"; if you cannot get Chat to work for you, or can't live without some new feature, please do not register the program in the hopes that this will obligate me to fix your problems. Feel free to contact me with your complaints or suggestions, and I will see what I can do about them, but don't send me a penny if you aren't satisfied! This might seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how often it happens.

Registering Chat

Chat is licensed on a per-copy basis. Each copy of the program that is running at one time is considered a separate copy. Thus, if twenty people use Chat in the morning and fifteen people use it in the afternoon, twenty copies have been used, even if these are thirty-five different people. You may make as many copies of the program as you like, wherever you like, as long as you have registered for all copies used simultaneously. Once again, I am not a lawyer; if this paragraph is ambiguous or you have questions on licensing, contact the author. I'll be happy to explain.

Site licenses are available for large sites. Contact the author for details.

To register Chat, send a check in US funds drawn on a US bank, along with the completed registration form (REGISTER.DOC) to the author at the address listed under technical support above. If you live in a country outside the U.S.A. and have difficulty getting an appropriate check, please contact the author and I'll see what we can do.

Installing Chat

Copying files

The Chat program consists of two files:

```
CHAT.EXE        (the program itself)
CHATHELP.HLP    (the text of Chat's online help).
```

Several other files, including this one, are included in the distribution, but only these two are required to run the program (see the file READ.ME for a description of all files in the distribution).

You need to copy these two files to a place where DOS can find them. You have two options here:

Use an existing directory: if you already have a directory where you generally keep utilities, this would be an excellent place to copy the Chat files. The SYS:PUBLIC directory on your Novell server would be a fine location.

Create a new directory: if you wish, you can create a separate directory for the Chat files, and add this directory to your DOS path.

I recommend the first method, since it is easier and does not add to your DOS path.

Note that you can safely rename the CHAT.EXE file to anything you like (CHAT.EXE is not the most unique name I could have chosen) but you should not rename the help file.

If you do not know how to perform any of these operations (copying files, making directories or altering your DOS path), please consult your DOS manual.

Once you have installed the two Chat files, you may start Chat simply by typing CHAT at the DOS command prompt.

Using Chat

Windows, Menus and Dialog Boxes

Chat uses Borland’s Turbo Vision to provide a CUA-like interface. This basically means that the interface uses windows, menus and dialog boxes to interact with the user (hence the name of this section). If you are familiar with such interfaces (e.g. Microsoft Windows or any recent Borland product), you can safely skip this section and go on to the Sending a Message section below. For those who are not familiar with this kind of interface, this section will attempt to provide a brief introduction. It is not meant to be comprehensive, and will certainly not be the best such introduction, but should get you going in Chat. Note that several of the keyboard commands may seem obscure or downright stupid, but I am following a widely used (even if obscure and stupid in places) standard.

Help

At any time, no matter what you are doing, you can press the F1 key for help. You should get a dialog box (see below) with help pertinent to your current location in the program. Note that it is a lot of tedious work to make sure that there is help for every location in the program, and I may have missed some spots. If you find a place that has no meaningful help message, please contact me, and I will correct the problem.

Windows

All text in Chat appears in a window. A window is a rectangular area of the screen, surrounded by a frame. Windows have the advantage that you can move them on your screen to arrange them to your satisfaction. If you have a mouse, you can move a window by clicking the mouse button on the top of the frame, dragging the window around the screen to its new position, and then releasing the mouse button. To change the size of the window, you can click the mouse on the very lower right corner of the frame, drag the mouse to the new lower right window corner, and release the mouse. If you do not have a mouse, you can press <Control-F5> to move or resize the window. When you do this, the arrow keys will move the window, and pressing Shift and an arrow key will resize the window. Chat will not let you move windows off the screen, or shrink them below a minimum size.

While there may be many windows on the screen at one time, only one can be active at any one time. You can always tell the active window by its frame; the active window will have a double-line border, while all other windows on the screen will have a single-line border. If you have a mouse, you can select the active window by clicking in it with the mouse. If you do not have a mouse, you can press the F6 key, or select "Next Window" from the Window menu (see below) to make the next window active. Repeatedly pressing F6 will allow you to make any window active.

Any typing you do is sent to the active window; thus, if you want to enter a message, the Enter window must be the active window.

Some windows can be closed. For instance, if you do not want to monitor a channel any more, you can close the channel window. A window that can be closed will have a small box on the upper left of the frame. If you have a mouse, you can close the window by clicking on this small box. If you do not have a mouse, you may press <Alt-F3> to close the active window.

Menus

Menus provide an easy way to get to commands without memorizing a vast number of obscure keystrokes. The line across the top of the Chat screen is known as a menu bar. It contains a list of menus, each of which contains a number of commands. When you want to issue a command on one of the menus, you will need to select the menu (this is commonly known as pulling down the menu).

You can select a menu in many ways. If you have a mouse, you may click on the menu name in the menu bar. If you do not have a mouse, you can press F10 to select the menu bar, use the arrow keys to choose the menu you want, then press Enter to select the menu. You will also note that one letter in each menu name is highlighted (for instance, the F in File is highlighted). You can select a menu by pressing Alt and the highlighted letter (i.e. <Alt-F> selects the File menu>.

When a menu is selected, a small window containing a list of the commands in that menu will appear. You may use the up and down arrow keys to move through the available commands, and the left and right arrow keys to select neighboring menus. Pressing F1 for help will get you a description of the current command. This is a good way to get a quick feel for what is possible in Chat, or any program using a similar interface.

When you wish to execute the current command, press the enter key (or click the mouse on the command). What happens then depends on the command you chose; for instance, picking "Quit" from the File menu will exit the program.

In many cases, there is a key combination listed to the right of the menu command (for instance, <Alt-X> appears next to Quit). This is a quick way of performing the command without pulling down the menu.

The most important "quick key" combinations are listed on the bottom line of the screen.

Dialog Boxes

Dialog boxes are a special kind of window used for getting you to make choices. For instance, when you open a new channel, a dialog box lists all the available channels and asks you to choose one.

Dialog boxes differ from normal windows in two ways: first, a dialog box is always the active window while it is on screen; and second, dialog boxes contain buttons.

Dialog boxes are always the active window since the program cannot continue until you make a decision. Thus, you cannot use the F6 key to make the next window active, nor can you pull down a menu. All you can do when a dialog box is on the screen is deal with that dialog box.

Buttons are small, highlighted words within the dialog box. For instance, nearly all dialogs have an "OK" button and a "Cancel" button. These buttons represent commands much as menu commands do.

To select a button, you can click on it with the mouse. If you do not have a mouse, you can press the Tab key to move from one button or other item in the dialog box to the next, much as F6 moves between windows. When the correct button is current, pressing Enter selects that button.

The Cancel button always discards the dialog box without making any chances. For instance, if you are selecting a channel to open and decide you do not want to open one after all, you can select Cancel. Pressing the ESC key is always the same as selecting Cancel.

The OK button informs the system you are done, and it should go ahead. For instance, when you have chosen the channel to open, selecting OK will open it.

Dialog boxes may also contain other buttons and fields where you enter information. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to describe them all, so remember the F1 key is your friend!

Sending a Message

To chat with your friends or colleagues, at least two of you need to start CHAT. Use the Enter window to enter and edit your message, which may be up to 500 characters long. Once your message is ready for the world, press <Control-enter> to send the message. Note that on large networks (there are 50+ servers on the network I use for testing) this may take a second or two to process. Once the message has been sent, it will appear on the screens of all others running Chat and tuned to your current channel (see Channels below), and the Enter window will be cleared.

Channels

Channels allow better control of messages while chatting. A message is always sent to a particular channel, and only people listening on that channel will be able to see it.

Channel Types

Chat provides two different types of channels. The most straightforward is the standard channel. There are ten standard channels available, and any user can access any of these channels at any time. Private channels are special channels that any user can create. However, only the person who created the channel and anyone else (s)he tells about it can access the channel. See Private Channels in the Advanced Features section for more details on creating and accessing private channels.

Opening Channels

To view or send on a channel, you must first open it. Channel One (a standard channel) is automatically opened when Chat starts. To open additional channels, press <Alt-O>, or select "Open Channel" from the Channel menu.

When you open a new channel, a window will open. All messages sent to that channel will appear in the window. You may move and resize the window (see Windows, Menus and Dialog Boxes above), or close it. The channel will also become your current channel (see below).

Current Channel

When you enter a message, it is sent to your current channel. You can always tell what your current channel is by the title of the Enter window (for instance, when you start, the Enter window is titled "Enter (Channel One)". When you open a new channel, it automatically becomes your current channel. If you want to change your current channel, use the Open Channel command to select it, even if it is already open.

Users of previous versions of Chat will note that this is a change in Chat 1.0. While it takes a little while to get used to hitting Alt-O to select your current channel, it really does make the interface simpler.

Advanced features

Private Channels

Any user can create a private channel at any time by selecting Make Private from the Channels menu. You will be prompted for the name of the new channel, and the channel window will be opened.

Note that the name of the channel is for human uses only. This means that you can call a channel anything you like, even if there is already another private channel by that name. For this reason, you should attempt to use descriptive names that are likely to be unique for your private channels. Otherwise you may end up with three open channels, all called "Private".

When you first make a private channel, it will be private indeed. In fact, only you will be able to access it. This is not particularly useful (why would you need a computer to talk to yourself?). In order to allow other users to use your new private channel, you must send an announcement to them informing them of the new channel.

You do this by selecting Announce Private from the Channel menu (this option is only available when your current channel is a private channel). You will be given a list of all the logged-on users (see List Users, below) and asked to select those to send the announcement to. Those you select will receive a message to the effect of "Masked_Avenger invites you to join private channel 'Discussion of Anvils'" and will then be able to open the private channel using the standard Open Channel command.

Please note that private channels are not very secure. Any moderately advanced Novell user with a packet sniffer can easily eavesdrop on a private channel. Never assume that a private channel is safe from snoopers.

User List

You can get a list of all people currently using Chat at any time by pressing <Alt-L> or selecting "List Users" from the File menu.

The Chat program needs to search the network for users when you do this, which will take a few seconds. You will not be able to enter messages while Chat is searching the network.

Private Messages

You may send a private message to any other person using Chat by pressing <Alt-P> or selecting "Private Message" from the file menu. When you do this, Chat will get a user list, as above. However, once the list of users appears, you may mark any of the listed users by clicking on their name with the mouse or pressing the space bar. If you then select "OK", you will be prompted to enter a message. You can enter this message in the same way as a normal message, and when you are ready to send the message, press <Control-Enter> or select "OK". Only the users you marked will receive the message.

This saves the overhead of creating a private channel for one-off, private messages. Again, these messages are not secure from network sniffers; you should assume that anyone who cares enough can intercept a private message.

Inviting a user to Chat

You may invite others to join the chat session using the Novell "send" mechanism. To invite a user, press <Alt-I>. You will be presented with a dialog asking you for a user name and server.

Enter the Novell login name of the person you wish to invite, and the server (s)he is currently logged into (leave this field blank for your current server).

If you are not currently attached to the server you specified, you will be asked to login to that server. Enter any valid username and password for that server.

Once you are attached to the appropriate server, the invitee will get a Novell send message similar to "Masked_Avenger invites you to chat", if they are logged on to the network.

Configuring Chat

Aliases

By default, Chat will use your Novell login name as your user name within the program. If you are not logged into a server or wish to use some other name, you can set the DOS environment variable CHATUSER to your alias. Your alias should be 48 characters or less in length, and may not contain spaces. For example:

```
SET CHATUSER=Masked_Avenger
```

Excluding networks

Chat will, by default, send messages to all networks known to the current server. You may wish to prevent Chat from sending messages to certain networks (networks on the other side of a slow WAN link, for instance). To determine the networks you wish to exclude, use the Novell SLIST command. All servers known to the current server will be listed, together with their "Network" and "Node" addresses. Take note of the network addresses of the servers you wish to exclude.

Once you have a list of networks you wish to exclude, create a file called EXCLUDE.CHT using any text editor. This file should contain a network number per line. If a line of the file contains anything other than a network number, Chat will print a warning message on startup. By default, Chat will look for this file in the directory where CHAT.EXE is located. If you have Chat in a network directory, this might not be practical, since all users would then have the same EXCLUDE.CHT. If you want to make a private EXCLUDE.CHT file, put the file anywhere you please, then set the environment variable CHATFILES to the drive and directory you put the file in. For example,

```
SET CHATFILES = C:\PRIVATE
```

Note that you will still receive messages from all users, even if they are on an excluded network. They will not, however, be able to see your messages.

Acknowledgments

Good people

Thanks to my charming wife, Gina, for putting up with evenings and weekends spent working on this program. Thanks also to all those who gave feedback on or registered previous versions of this program.

Thanks also to IBM for providing the OS/2 operating system, the finest development environment I have ever had.

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