IBM Manual Explains How SAA User Interface Should Look

By Sharon Fisher

PC applications running under IBM's Systems Application Architecture (SAA) must support the use of a mouse, but users will be able to customize their interfaces if desired.

This and other directives appear in a preliminary draft of IBM's *Common User Access SAA* manual obtained by *InfoWorld*. The manual, to be formally released in December, is a specification for application developers that explains how the user interface should look. Minicomputer and mainframe applica-

tions that support SAA will use the same kind of user interface. For example, the F1 function key will always mean "help."

The 330-page manual defines 21 panel elements, including graphical displays such as icons, circular radio buttons, and oval push buttons. It even specifies what colors should be used for different types of user messages and how to select the proper one-letter mnemonic code for a user action.

Common User Access defines the concept of panels as a predefined group-

ing of information arranged in a specified way and displayed on a screen. Each panel is displayed within a window; however, a complete panel does not always fit inside one window, depending on the size of the panel and the number of windows on the screen.

The Common User Access package includes identical 5¼- and 3½-inch disks containing sample Common User Access screens and interaction techniques.

But not all of the information is a rule, according to the manual. "Although this book is about panel design and interaction techniques, it does not tell application developers how to implement those designs and interaction techniques." A programmer's guide or development tool is also required to explain how to implement the Common User Access, said the manual.

Card Lets Micro Channel Systems Use PC Bus Boards

By Mark Brownstein

LAS VEGAS — An adapter that allows the use of PC bus computer boards in Micro Channel bus systems was announced here last week by Advanced Digital Corp.

The Transformer 2 is a board/cable combination that installs in an IBM PS/2 Model 50, 60, or 80 and into a required PC expansion box, which is not included with the product.

A special card, called the ADC XI Card, is installed into the expansion box and is connected by cable to the Transformer card, which is installed in the Micro Channel computer. When properly connected, 8-bit expansion cards can be run by the Micro Channel computer. The product will only work with expansion boxes and is not compatible with PC bus computers. Only 8-bit cards are supported.

The product combination is compatible with Novell Netware and will also be compatible with OS/2, according to Hossein Asadi, president of ADC. In addition, the product provides compatibility with most board enhancements, including Ethernet and RS-232, and can run a direct memory access (DMA) channel between the PS/2 and Micro Channel devices.

The Transformer 2 card has a suggested retail price of $695 and will be available later this month.

Advanced Digital Corp., 5432 Production Drive, Huntington Beach, CA 92649; (714) 891-4004.

Autodesk Program Animates Drawings And 3-D Models

LAS VEGAS — Autodesk Inc., maker of the popular Autocad computer-aided drawing program, demonstrated here last week an unreleased EGA-based program that animates drawings and three-dimensional models.

The program, called Autoflix, lets users create presentations that simulate a camera moving around and inside objects, as well as showing objects in motion from a fixed angle, said John B. Forbes, Autocad's product manager.

The product will ship in early 1988 and will cost under $500, Forbes said.

The user can create an animation by choosing a series of points that define a path of motion for the camera, Forbes said. Lighting and the camera's number of frames, focal length, height, type of lens, and viewpoint are specified by a series of prompts.

The program also lets users run through the animation one frame at a time or output the completed animation to video tape, Forbes added. It compresses each frame to take up only 5 percent of its original size in memory.

Autoflix must be used with one of Autodesk's other products — Autocad, Autosketch, or Autoshade — he said.

Autodesk Inc., 2320 Marinship Way, Sausalito, CA 94965; (415) 332-2344.

— Eric Lach