Question Mark™ NEWS

Short Of Time?
Call the Presence Authoring Service!

Question Mark was created to make the authoring and administration of quizzes, tests and surveys easier. Up until the late 1980s, no one had figured out how to make this kind of technology truly accessible to teachers, trainers and other professionals who were not necessarily computer experts.

The desire to make technology accessible and easy to use has been a major theme in the Question Mark story. For this reason, we are always looking for ways to make life easier for our customers. We are eager to tell you about a major step forward we have taken to simplify your use of Question Mark: we have started a question authoring service!

We've designed the service for those of you who know you will save lots of time with Question Mark but don't have the time to computerize your questions. You are full of good intentions, but there just aren't enough hours in the day.

If you are one of those people, all you need to do is fax your questions to us, and we will put them on a Windows disk and return them directly to you. Then, using your own Question Mark software, you can administer the questions and get the answers marked automatically.

The authoring service costs $20 per question with a minimum charge of $500. To use the service you must own or purchase Question Mark for Windows software to run the questions and process the answers. △

INSIDE

University of California On QM Web

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News From Our Users

Upgrading to Win95?

No problem! Question Mark for Windows will function just fine with your new Windows software. In fact, the design of our Windows software anticipated some of the changes that have been incorporated in Windows 95.

New Services For A New Season

We at Question Mark are celebrating the new season with some new services for our customers.

For starters, we now accept credit cards in payment for our products and services. We will soon be offering evaluation copies of Question Mark so that you can try out the complete software before you commit yourself to buying it. And finally, we have just started a question authoring service for people who are long on enthusiasm for the benefits of using Question Mark but short on the time needed to get their questions computerized.

We are always eager to hear from Question Mark users about ways in which we can help you, and these three initiatives are the direct result of listening to our customers and responding to their needs.

Please take a few minutes to read our newsletter, which includes a story about one of the most technologically advanced business schools in the country and some practical design pointers for beginners.

Enjoy your reading, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Eric Shepherd
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Question Mark
S·O·F·T·W·A·R·E

UC Irvine Beta Tests QM Web Interactive

Imagine using the same software for on-site quizzes, course evaluations and distance learning exams – all via the Internet. The Graduate School of Management of the University of California at Irvine is now Beta testing QM Web Interactive with the goal of using it for all these activities and possibly more. The new software enables users to get on-line feedback on the Internet.

Students of economics at UCI's Graduate School of Management enter one of three state-of-the-art "electronic classrooms" with their laptop computers, which they use to take Question Mark quizzes at the end of each lecture. Because they are on the Internet as well as a local area network, the students can all take the same test regardless of what type of laptop they use. With 60 people in any one class, response times on the school's local area network would be too slow, so the quizzes are marked via QM Web Interactive. Less than a second after finishing each test, students can see all wrong answers on their screens, and the computer explains what the right answer should have been. Lecturers at the school say students love the instant feedback.

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This is just the start for QM Interactive at UCI. The management school also hopes to allow people on distance education MBAs to take quizzes and tests via the Internet, and the School of Management has already wired an electronic classroom at the Hyatt Newporter Hotel in Newport Beach as part of its executive MBA program for health care professionals. Course evaluations will also be done using Question Mark instead of paper questionnaires.

According to Tony Zamanian, Database Administrator/Director of Administrative Computing for the School of Management, Question Mark has the potential to transform the way educators regard tests.

"This will completely change the way we use tests," says Tony. "We are starting to look at tests as learning tools in a very active sense of the word. For example, you might want to run students through a test just as a means of letting them know what's going to be expected of them. Instant feedback will give them an idea of their strengths and weaknesses and put them on the right track for studying the material. Then, a few weeks later they can come back to the same test – or one with similar but not identical questions – with a better mastery of the material."

In addition to Question Mark testing, UC Irvine has implemented many other practical steps to enhance learning. Peter Navarro, Associate Professor of Public Policy, feels that all of these steps enhance the educational experience in an environmentally and humanly friendly way. Here is his explanation of some of the major things that are happening at the Graduate School of Management, which boasts one of the most sophisticated and well-equipped computer labs in the country.

1. Information Transfer: There is no paper in class. All information, whether from teacher to student or vice versa, is transferred digitally off the class Web page. The syllabus, class notes or graphic presentations are posted as files on the Web page. Students then download them into their computers. Assignments are "handed in" in the same way.

2. No More Blackboards: All lectures are accompanied by animated, colorful visual presentations using PowerPoint software. The laptop is hooked up to the classroom's color video projector. The instructor has a remote control device to advance the "slides" from anywhere in the room. This visual aid helps students better remember what the professor is saying. Students can also follow along on their own computer with their own copy of the presentation. They take notes right on the electronic file. Again, no paper is involved.

3. No More Office Hours: Professors no longer meet with students unless requested. There is a "virtual office" in cyberspace, which students can regularly visit. This office was built using the "Chat Room" feature of Netscape. During "office hours" students log into the chat room and direct questions to the professor. There is a loss of face-to-face contact and that's a negative. However, the virtual office increases student participation. It's more convenient to visit with the professor on the Net than it is to commute to campus.

4. Cruising the Net: To enhance discussions about economics and public policy, relevant newspaper articles can be accessed right on the Internet. Then, using Groupsys, an opinion polling software, the professor can benchmark student attitudes on any given issue, such as balancing the budget. Students can graphically see how their attitudes may change during the discussion as they acquire more information.

PRACTICAL POINTERS.

Some answers to our readers' latest queries from the Question Mark™ technical team.

Q: *I have a large number of question files. What is is the best way to browse them?*

A: Use the Associate option in Windows Files Manager to associate .QDT files with PRESENT.EXE. Then you can view your questions simply by double clicking on the file within File Manager.

Q: *If I already have questions in text files, can I transfer them into Question Mark?*

A: Yes. Windows has a built in "Copy and Paste" mechanism. Copy text from an existing document to the clipboard and then paste it into a question. If you are going to use similar text more than once, in feedback messages for instance, use copy and paste and then amend the text. Remember that copy and paste works throughout Windows - in filename edit boxes, etc. You can copy text from DOS programs as well. Press Alt-Enter to put the program in a DOS window, then select Edit from the system menu.

Q: *What advice would you have for a beginning Question Mark user in regard to layout and style?*

A: Don't try too hard to make impressive question layouts. Use only one font, a maximum of three or four sizes,

> Browsing large numbers of test files ... Using "Copy and Paste" ... Layouts and styles.

and a limited range of colors. Use the Question Editor grid to keep the layout clean. Start with the grid at Coarse to lay out the components, and then reduce the grid to Medium or Fine for the finishing touches. Don't be afraid to experiment with question layouts. Then, when you have decided which layouts you like, stick with them. To do this, make your own layout with an explanation question type and then "Save as Style." Change the question type, then save again. Repeat this for each question type, giving each question a brief description before saving as style. Every time you create a new question, use one of your own styles to create a consistent layout. This will keep components (the OK button for example) from jumping around the screen in different questions. △

QM Welcomes Canadian Endorsement

Jim Baird and Greg Johnson were discouraged!

They had been searching for testing software that they could use in their own college and also combine with some computer based training courseware that they were creating. Unhappy with existing courseware, they were developing new courseware in partnership with Humber College in Toronto, Ontario, one of the largest community colleges in Canada. Their search for good testing software had been equally exasperating. They had researched numerous packages but none of them was equal to the task. Would they have to create their own computerized test authoring package from scratch as well?

Greg and Jim were considering just that when, last November, they saw a

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demonstration of Question Mark at a technology conference put on by the League for Innovation, a consortium of some of the best colleges in North America that promotes technological innovation in community colleges.

"We mentally went down the list of the functions that we were looking for and Question Mark had every single one," recalls Jim, a professor of Information System Studies at Humber. "We were so impressed, we called Presence Corporation as soon as we got back to our hotel to arrange a meeting."

Greg, who is a technical support advisor in the Academic Computing department at Humber, had been responsible for the administration of computer based college placement tests and was well acquainted with the deficiencies and demands of computerized exams and the difficulties of getting them to run securely over a network. For him, seeing Question Mark was like being handed the gift of time; there would be no need, now, to invent

Welcome (From Page 3)

new testing software.

In an interview with Greg and Jim, Greg commented, "As education goes digital and on-line authoring software becomes critical in the development of computer based learning, Question Mark is a true test authoring program that should be part of any teaching/learning development environment." Jim, who developed and implemented the first CBT lab at Humber, agreed, stating that "for faculty, ease of use and the ability to develop comprehensive, adaptive tests are critical and Question Mark allows us to do that beautifully."

In addition to their jobs at Humber, Greg and Jim are part of a team that is developing computer based training courseware for packages such as MS Word, Excel, Windows, etc. They intend to market this courseware to educational institutions in the U.S., Canada, and internationally. Not only was Question Mark an ideal complement to their courseware; they also recognized the need for other Canadian colleges and universities, as well as businesses, to use Question Mark as a standard testing package for a wide variety of subjects.

With this in mind, Jim and Greg have signed up with Presence Corporation as resellers of Question Mark and are already telling other Canadian (and international) institutions about Question Mark.

Presence Corporation's president, Eric Shepherd, sees tremendous promise in Jim and Greg's work.

"This is the first development of mass market products based on Question Mark and it will be of tremendous benefit to all our resellers," says Eric. "Naturally, we are more pleased than we can say to receive Jim and Greg's endorsement after the extensive research they did on other testing software packages." △

Our Users (From Page 2)

5. Audio, Video and CD-Rom Applications:

These are the low-tech applications. Lectures are recorded on audio cassettes so students can listen to them outside the classroom. This is popular with students with longer commutes and with foreign students. In the future, there will also be a video version of each lecture. Eventually, the audio and video material will be packaged as a CD-ROM, enhancing the school's remote access teaching capability.

"We have only begun to tap the potential of the electronic classroom," says Professor Navarro. "Professors are constantly looking for new applications to try and most are convinced that the computer can be a powerful classroom tool." △

Charge It!

We are pleased to announce that we now have credit card merchant status.

This means you can put your purchase of Question Mark products onto a Visa or MasterCard account. In order to make purchases even easier, we are also offering prospective buyers full demonstration software for one month.

You will receive complete Question Mark software, together with a user's manual, for just $30. If you decide to buy Question Mark after you have had some experience with it, we'll send you a permanent version of the software.

VISA

MasterCard

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