

Don't forget that you can send your help requests to the Quanta Helpline by email to helpline@quanta.org.uk or to the Helpline Coordinator (me) at my address printed inside the front cover of Quanta magazine. Another good source of help on QL-related matters is the QL-Users email mailing list - see the article in the December 2009/January 2010 issue of Quanta magazine for details of how to join and use the list.

Two topics this time, both of which arose from queries on the QL-Users mailing list.

Q. How can I check which DOS directory my QPC is executed from? Sometimes I run my QPC from a pen drive, sometimes from the PC's hard disk.

Tobias Fröschle suggested:

this is where my method QPC_EXEC "" comes in handy - It will just show you where QPC was started from - regardless of drive mapping.

Norman Dunbar suggested:

What I do is define DOS8_ to be the setting ./ (dot slash) which seems to work.

On Linux, under wine it needs to be changed from ./ and I use the directory selector button to navigate to the directory where I executed QPC from. In my case it is media/CRUCIAL/qpc3v33 which wine changes to something like c:\qpc3v33\.

Regardless, dir dos8_ gives a listing of the qpc directory and no doubt LET d\$ = DOS_DRIVE\$(8) would return the directory.

George Gwilt remarked that the QPC_EXEC "" method was "an excellent idea which certainly works. I have never used QPC_EXEC before."

So the discussion then moved on to what you could do with the **QPC_EXEC** command on QPC2.

QPC_EXEC can be used to start many PC programs, without having to exit QPC and so on.

Have a look at the article "Taking advantage of Windows" in QL Today volume 13 issue 1 page 41 (September to November 2008). It shows how to make good use of QPC_EXEC to start Windows programs from within QPC. You can even define HOT_CMD hotkeys with QPC_EXEC commands to start PC programs using QL hotkeys!

I find this really useful for little jobs I can't (yet) do from QPC, like firing up Windows Media Player to play my favourite MP3 music files, for example. Most Windows programs have command line switch facilities so you can pass filenames to them and so on.

```
QPC_EXEC "wmplayer.exe","path_filename.mp3"
```

Need to browse a particular website (plug plug!):

```
QPC_EXEC "c:\program files\windows explorer\iexplore.exe",  
"http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/index.html"
```

The more you start to play with QPC_EXEC the more you realise you can achieve!

Your project now is to write a little QL program to control your PC!

Marcel Kilgus kindly reminded me that you don't always have to specify the Windows program to use, as the defaults system might start the correct program associated with the file for you, rather like the File Info II system on QDOS or SMSQ systems. For example, you can

pass just a URL to Windows using QPC_EXEC and it will automatically load it using the default browser on your system:

```
QPC_EXEC "http:\\www.dilwyn.me.uk\\index.html"
```

will work, too, and start the default browser (e.g. Opera in my case), which might be preferable and does not rely on a hard-coded path. Same with

```
QPC_EXEC "path_filename.mp3"
```

Which would start the associated MP3 file player.

Where all this becomes really exciting is using QL hotkeys to fire up Windows programs, minimising the time taken to switch from QPC to Windows, finding the program in the START menu and so on:

```
ERT HOT_CMD("w",'QPC_EXEC "http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/gen/qlnet/qlnet.html")
```

(Please note the use of mixed double and single quote marks within that command - in particular, the command ends with double quote and single quote in that order before the closing bracket).

This starts up your Windows browser, at my "Links to QL websites" page from where you can select whichever QL website you'd like to visit! Quick and simple, with no intervening Windows keystrokes!

When it comes to music, you could probably write a little SBASIC program with filenames of your favourite MP3 music files, held as Windows paths and filenames in DATA statement, write a short menu to select these filenames and pick and play your music files (or even playlists if you know where Windows stores them and their filenames) without ever having to leave QPC!

Here's an over-simplified program you can start as an SBASIC job and leave it running to select songs as you go along:

```
100 REMark MP3 selector (works only on QPC2!)
110 DIM song$(20,40)
120 RESTORE
130 no% = 0
140 REPEAT
150   IF EOF:EXIT
160   READ song$(no%)
170   no% = no%+1
180 END REPEAT
190 :
200 REMark display as a menu
210 CLS : CLS #0
220 FOR a = 1 TO no% : PRINT a TO 3;song$(a-1)
230 REPEAT
240   INPUT #0,'Enter number of song to play > ';song_no%
250   IF song_no% = 0 THEN EXIT
260   IF song_no% <= no% THEN QPC_EXEC song$(song_no%)
270 END REPEAT
280 :
290 PRINT #0,'Program Finished.'
300 STOP
310 :
320 DATA 'C:\music\song1.mp3'
330 DATA 'C:\music\song2.mp3'
340 DATA 'C:\music\song3.mp3'
350 DATA 'C:\music\song4.mp3'
```

360 DATA 'C:\music\song5.mp3'

Q. Does anyone know of any standard floppy disk imaging software for the QL - to make a single file on the PC for example, which would be the equivalent of a floppy disk which all emulators could read / write to ? Might be an interesting little project if anyone is interested.

Dave Walker replied:

Why not just use the venerable rawread/rawrite programs on the PC side that do sector imaging into a file? It would be easy enough to do one that runs on the QL side but is there really a need for it? Somewhere I even have a driver for the PC side that allows such an image to be attached as though it was a real floppy.

Dave mentioned Rawread/Rawrite - get this from <http://www.pamarsystems.com/raw.html>
I guess a simple web search for 'rawtext sources' might find some other sources too.

There's also an article from Tim Swenson about Rawread/Rawrite from a QL file transfer angle on my website at <http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/gen/pcqlxfer/raw.html>

Rich then followed up with another suggestion:

Which emulators can use a qxl.win file maybe we just need a smaller subset of this which would be floppy disk size? Can someone please share the details of this format?

A QXL.WIN file is a filing system used as a container for QL files in another operating system's filing system. For example, under Windows, a QL emulator can "isolate" its files from the Windows one by placing the files all in a single large Windows files called a QXL.WIN. Some emulators will even allow you to change the name "QXL.WIN" if you prefer, or wish to have more than one.

As far as emulators are concerned, the following can handle QXL.WIN directly:

QPC1, QPC2, QXL, QemuLator for Windows (not the Apple Mac version though), uQLx for Linux, don't know about the Windows/Mac versions.

Various systems like Q40/Q60 can handle QXL.WIN via extra software like QCDEZE and Wolfgang Lenerz's QXLWIN programs.

QLay/QL2K can apparently extract files from QXL.WIN via their tools programs, but I have never tried it.

Qubide I think can if you have Thierry's Atapi/IDE drivers and possibly QCDEZE.

Information about the QXLWIN file format can be obtained from
<http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/docs/formats/index.html>

It is, in theory at least, possible to use QXL.WIN from a floppy disk, although as a QXL.WIN has to be at least 1MB in size, it could not be used on a DSDD 720KB disk for example.

Norman Dunbar suggested we go to <http://qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk> and there is a section on QL filesystems. He has documented the QXL/QPC "hard disk" and floppy disk formats there. When on his site, click on the qdosmsq link in the index on the left, then fs (filing systems) and then start and choose the section you are interested in.

The direct link to the article about "QLWA" hard disk filing systems itself is:

<http://qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk/doku.php?id=qdosmsq:fs:qlwa>