

Over the past few months I have been asked about variations on this basic problem. You are in need of another (or several more) computers and while you are comfortable with your ///, you wonder if there world isn't passing you by with the new Apples and IBMs that are out there. Your budget is not unlimited so cost is definitely a factor.

If the A/// does everything you need except that you need another machine, then the obvious solution is to buy another A/// from Sun Data. You are already familiar with the software, your data is totally compatible with the new machine and you can get one for less than \$700.

Another path to take would be to go to the MS-DOS (ie IBM or IBM clone) world. If you get a clone, you can get new hardware for about the same price as the A///, except that I would not recommend anyone using a MS-DOS machine without a 20MB harddisk. You are now at least over \$1100 and you still need software. Even at discounted prices the popular programs are \$300 each, although you can buy clones of most of those too. However, you will probably end up spending almost as much, if not more, on software as you did on hardware. You will also have to learn the new operating system, learn the new programs and have to transfer your old data over to the new system.

Another path is the MacIntosh. With the release of the MacPlus, SE, and Mac II (wonder if there will be a Mac ///, probably not) the Mac is a beautiful machine. It is relatively fast, easy to learn and well supported by software.

However, it is not cheap (there are no clones) and by the time you get a basic system with software, you will spend at least \$4000. You will also have the problem of transferring you data over to the new format. This can be done by serial cable for ASCII files, but your databases will be more difficult, although not impossible by any means.

The other option that I normally consider is the Apple //GS. The similiarities between this machine and the A/// are many. From the keyboard to the built-in features, these are very similiar machines. The operating system is rumored to be a superset of SOS, although with a 16-bit chip it will not need the A/// bankswitching scheme. Its floppy disk format is identical to SOS, so data files can be transferred. This means that you could take your 3EZPieces file and read it into Appleworks and continue working as before. With Appleworks, there would be no lost time retraining people to learn a new program. How many other A/// programs will transfer over remains to be seen as Word Juggler never did well in the A// world and Advanced Visicalc is gone. A new //GS system will cost more than an MS-DOS clone, although less than a IBM or a Mac. Also you will still need new GS software, but all those AII+ programs you have been running in emulation will now run in native (8 bit) mode on the //GS.

While there are more factors than this in your decision, this will at least give you a start.

- Rod Whitten