December 8, 2005 Chat with Carl

Janet enters this room

[Alyce] Hi Janet!

[Janet] Hi, Alyce. I can't stay more than 10 - 15 minutes.

[Alyce] I havent' downloaded your newest flowchart yet

[Janet] Have you done a lot with the newest Assist?

[Alyce] I can't wait to see it. The previous versions were
terrific.

[Alyce] I've been using Assist quite a bit, how about you?

[Janet] Flowchart: It's still buggy, but at least now the bugs
can be singled out.

[Janet] I've used it a lot, but only with the same types of
things. (Assist)

[Janet] This means I haven't found any problems (and I do like it),
but I haven't pushed it either.

[Alyce] Yes, I think we each do out own "thing" with it.

[Janet] What do you think about FreeForm? Do you think your entry
will win?

[Alyce] I don't use the code formatter, for instance.

[Janet] I would say 'hands down', but Dan's looked pretty good as well.

[Alyce] Gosh, I don't know about Freeform. I thought all of the entries
had great features.

[Janet] Assist: I really like the code formatter, but I tend to write
in outline form anyway. I find myself adapting to the Assist style quite well.

[Alyce] Do you use the performance profiler in the debugger?

[Janet] Assist: The versioning is by far the best feature.

[Janet] I used it just to test it out, but not as a regular feature.

[Alyce] I used it with the rendering routines, but my computer is fast, so I couldn't see much difference.

[Alyce] Yes, the versioning rocks!

[Alyce] I love looking at the difference browser, too.

[Janet] Tomorrow I'm going to just go through every feature one by one and make notes on them.

[Alyce] I used to have two windows open next to one another to search out the differences between files. This is so much easier.

[Janet] I told Carl I'd have something by the end of the weekend for a review for you both to preview.

[Alyce] That's great!

[Janet] Side by side windows? Yeah!! And do you make sure they're lined up perfectly so just by a single scroll, you can spot a difference? LOL

[Alyce] Carl was here in the chatroom, and we just missed him by a few minutes. Darn.

[Janet] That's what is so great about the versioning.

[Alyce] Yes, I did line them up! The difference browser is so cool, with the different colors. The differences just jump out at you.

[Janet] Carl will probably come back. He was still logged into the forum when I got here. You did say 3pm our time.

Bwebmaster enters this room

[Janet] Hi, Bwebmaster!

[Alyce] We can copy the chat and archive it, if anything interesting is said.

[Alyce] Hello B.

[Janet] I just think there have been so many new and wonderful things these last 3 or 4 months that it's just so hard to find the time to play with them all.

[Alyce] Have you tried John's FTP program? I haven't had a chance, yet.

[Janet] I definitely need to work with your browser more. That .gif
display was lots of fun to write.

[Bwebmaster] What exactly is assist?

[Alyce] That was cool. I never envisioned some of the things people
do with the browser.

[Alyce] Assist is an enhancement of the LB IDE>

[Alyce] Janet is writing a review that we hope to publish.

[Bwebmaster] From what I've heard, it has versioning features that make
it easier to modify code.

[Janet] John's FTP: But, I did download a picture from my site (soon to be
announced site) and that worked just fine. OKay, back to Assist.

[Alyce] B, that's right.

[Janet] Assist: Bwebmaster, you are going to love the versioning.

[Alyce] You have a project, and you commit versions as you go along.

[Bwebmaster] Sounds great. Are they any other eye-popers?

[Alyce] When you make substantial changes, commit to a new version.

[Janet] Assist: and, I'll be you'll be intrigued by the performance
profiler as well in the debugger. It tells you how much time the code
is spending in any one event.

[Alyce] All are stored for you, along with comments that you enter
when you commit.

[Alyce] Scroll up and see what we were saying about the difference browser.

[Bwebmaster] Wow, that is great stuff!

[Alyce] It is really neat.

[Janet] It formats your code with auto nested indenting. It's just
really cool.

[Alyce] There's a program deployment tool that's more full-featured

than the Create Application.

[Alyce] I haven't used it much.

[Alyce] You can specify additional files, and an icon, and a deployment path.

[Bwebmaster] Hmm... deployment.... sounds like VB .NET Express's deploy application feature

[Alyce] Janet, I can't wait to see your site!

[Janet] The deployment tool works really well, but it was a little hard for me to get the hang of it the first time. It will be interesting to see how easy it is to follow the directions in Carl's new help file.

Carl enters this room

[Alyce] If you deply, you still have to zip your files, or use an installer program.

[Alyce] Hi Carl.

[Bwebmaster] Hi, Carl

[Janet] It's very simple right now, Alyce. I'm just trying to find the time to add some links before I announce it.

[Janet] Hi, Carl.

[Janet] So far you haven't missed any negative things about Assist, just good remarks.

[Carl] Hi all!

[Alyce] Janet, I agree about the deployment tool being a little tricky.

[Bwebmaster] Well, I have to say that Deploy App would cut out most of the use I currently have for ResHacker

[Alyce] I bugged Carl, er, I mean made suggestions and it's a little easier now.

[Janet] I think you'll really like it. Once I got the hang of it, it worked really well.

[Carl] Of course I am interested in making Assist easier to use,
but right now I'm just trying to get a first release out.

[Janet] And my learning curve does seem to be a little longer than most.

[Bwebmaster] Does it make an installer program?

[Alyce] One thing I've found... make lots of programmers
comments when you commit a version.

[Alyce] B, no, that's what I was saying. There's no installer,
but all of your files are gathered together, so it's easy to
use one of the free installers with them.

[Carl] Assist doesn't make an installer. That'd be a whole new
product by itself.

[Janet] I really like the Help File, Carl. The pictures really
help a lot. I didn't realize I was becoming a very visual learner.....

[Alyce] Yes, the step-by-step pictures are great.

[Bwebmaster] OK, guess I shouldn't throw out my setup maker just yet.

[Carl] I figured that the easiest way to explain Assist would
be with a walkthrough with lots of images.

[Alyce] Carl, the help is terrific.

[Bwebmaster] Carl, how much will Assist cost?

[Janet] Alyce, Can I quote you on that in the review:
"make lots of programmers comments...."

[Alyce] Sure, Janet.

[Alyce] Carl, generally, a helpfile should be more of a reference,
but with Assist, the tutorial is really needed to understand how
to use it well.

[Carl] I guess if there is a popular setup creator that could be
driven by a file, that a mechanism for launching another program
at the end of deployment would be helpful. Thoughts?

[Bwebmaster] Huh?

[Alyce] I don't know much about setup makers. I use Setup2Go

[Alyce] I don't know if any will run by a command line or script file.

[Janet] program launcher - and that (the choice of a program) could be customized by the user?

[Carl] You know, like a way to script some external actions at the end of deploying. That way it could be used with your favorite setup creator.

[Bwebmaster] Oh, now I get it. The only 'modular'

[Bwebmaster] Ignore that last one.

[Alyce] Carl, Bwebmaster asked about the price. Is it set yet?

[Janet] I'm just playing with the colors. Am I green now?

[Carl] Assist will cost $49.95 and requires that the user have a GOLD license.

[Janet] Ohhh.,.. scratch that color

[Carl] scratch that one too, please?

[Alyce] LOL

[Janet] Sorry, this chat thing is a bit new to me. Going back to black now.

[Alyce] Janet is traveling incognito!

[Carl] Yeah, enough itchy colors. ;-)

[Bwebmaster] That is very reasonable, compared to $400+ for Visual Studio .NET

[Carl] I'm glad you think so.

[Alyce] LB is so much easier to use, that you can't really compare them.

[Carl] I know some people will think that an add-on should

cost less than the thing you're adding it onto.

[Janet] How is the testing going for LB4.3? There doesn't seem to be any major glitches at first run.

[Bwebmaster] Yes, I got the free VB.NET thing MS is doing, so far it has hogged memory and looked ugly

[Bwebmaster] The menus are blue! That

JohnD enters this room

[Carl] Well, there have been a handful of bug reports, but nothing major. On the other hand I'm not sure how many people are really trying it out. I should actively solicit some response.

[Alyce] John! Yo!

[Bwebmaster] Hey, John

[Janet] Hi, John!

[Carl] Hi John!

[Bwebmaster] As far as scripting the deploy application, I would use it.

[Alyce] Carl, what about the null terminator thing that Mike just posted about?

[JohnD] Hi Carl

[Carl] Noted.

[Janet] I remember when 4.01 was tested. Immediately there were problems with dll's. So this silence could be a good tihng.

[Carl] Not sure I know what null terminator thing you mean?

[Bwebmaster] Dunno if anyone's familiar with Inno, but you write out scripts that it 'compiles' into a setup program

[Alyce] Unfortunately, a lot of folks prefer to wait for an official release.

[Alyce] Are null terminators necessary to pass strings byref into api calls?

[Alyce] It seems they are no longer needed.

[Alyce] Inno takes scripts and runs from the command line?

[Carl] Since v4.03 is almost exclusively fixes, this will
hopefully help prevent too many issues from arising. But you
never know.

[Bwebmaster] Basically, I could use such a feature to automate
the entire depolyment process

[Alyce] Carl, why would we use the mainwin on debug feature?

[Carl] So you're looking to fix that information in the docs?
Let me get back to you on that.

[Alyce] Right...

[Janet] I have to leave now. I'm really sorry I can't stay longer.
I'll look for the archive later to see if I've missed anything.

[Alyce] Bye Janet. Take care.

[Bwebmaster] I use it to make sure varaiables are what they should be

[Bwebmaster] And then firgure out what went wrong

[JohnD] By Janet

[Bwebmaster] which would be much easier with what assist is offering

[Carl] That new feature was inspired by Wilf Hey, who is a
columnist for PC Plus magazine. He wanted to be able to put
debug strings in his code, and then be able to look at those
strings without having to comment out the nomainwin statement
and then uncomment it.

[Janet] Bye, all!

[Alyce] VB has a debug.print command and it prints stuff to the
immediate window in the IDE. I guess the 'open mainwin on debug'
would do the same thing.

Janet exits from this room

[Carl] By Janet.

[Bwebmaster] Alyce, what version of VB do you use?

[Alyce] I guess I either use the debugger, or print info to the mainwin. I'll have to try them in tandem.

[Carl] Aside from Assist, that feature is the only new thing i n v4.03, unless I'm forgetting something. :-/

[Carl] And the bugfixes of course.

[Alyce] I think that's all.

[Carl] Some people love to pepper their programs with debug strings.

[Bwebmaster] Well, that's pretty good

[Alyce] John, what do you like best about Assist.

[Bwebmaster] Will this be the last 4x LB release?

[Alyce] Carl, that gives me an idea...

[Alyce] If we could have a debug.print type command, it needn't be compiled into the TKN.

[Alyce] As it is, we need to remove those debug strings before tokenizing to reduce the size.

[Bwebmaster] Hey, that sounds nice!

[Carl] I'm not sure if this will be the last v4.x. There will probably be another release of Assist for LB4 if nothing else.

[Carl] Yeah, that's a good idea for LB v4.04. :-)

[Alyce]

[Carl] LB5 won't even have TKN files.

[Bwebmaster] Well, if this is the last 4x, then LB5 would be priority, which is fine by me

[Alyce] Ooo, tell us more!

[Bwebmaster] Just how does that work?

[Alyce] Will you bind the code to the runtime engine?

[Bwebmaster] Will it be embedded inside a runtime as a custom resource?

[Bwebmaster] The TKN, that is

[Carl] LB5 will embed its programs into the runtime engine.

[Alyce] That sounds great. Is Scott working on LB5 with you?

[Bwebmaster] Will this affect speed for the better?

[Carl] But not as a TKN file treated as a resource. There will be no intermediate format at all. The compiled objects will live in the runtime engine as native Smalltalk objects, just like everything else in the runtime engine.

[Carl] Yes, Scott is working on this with me.

[Bwebmaster] Cool! That sounds like it would speed up execution greatly!

[Alyce] This sounds really exciting!

[Carl] Liberty BASIC 5 will blow LB4 away in terms of speed. Some of you may know that I quoted a 5x factor before.

[Bwebmaster] Sounds like real-time 3D will be possible

[Alyce] Are you considering a feature that allows us to create graphics in memory?

[Bwebmaster] Which would be great, because I've been begged to make a 3D game

[Alyce] (I'm still in "Freeform mode!"

[Carl] I really want to do that Alyce. Right now I'm just busy trying to get all the basics working. We're getting ther.

[Carl] there.

[JohnD] I'm trying to join in, but I'm playing with kids too.

[Alyce] Gee, John, you'd rather play with the kids? Me, too!
Can I come over?

[Bwebmaster]

[Alyce] Carl, do you have an eta for alpha or beta testing of LB5

[Carl] I'm not quite sure yet, but it looks like we may be able to
do even better than a 5x speedup.

[Bwebmaster] Good question

[Alyce] More than 5x as fast sounds very impressive.

[Carl] Well, we're shooting to demo what we have in a couple of months,
so perhaps we will have an alpha release in the Spring.

[Bwebmaster] That would make 3D more than possible

[Carl] That will be for Windows, Mac OS X and Linux simultaneously.

[Alyce] Will the alpha release be cross-platform, do you think?

[Carl] More or less simultaneously.

[Bwebmaster] Can you give us a scoop on what features you plan to add?

[Carl] Yes.

[Alyce] Um, gee, I shoulda waited a minute.. you answered me before
I asked!

[Carl] Hmm. I didn't really come prepared to answer that question.

[Alyce] I have an old laptop with Linux installed. I guess I need to
get a mac mini to test the mac version!

[Bwebmaster] Well, how about what would be do-able

[Carl] Certainly the alpha version will be quite limited.

[Alyce] Hey, cross-platform and a big increase in speed... those features
sound great all by themselves.

[Bwebmaster] That's true,Alyce

[Carl] One cool thing I would really like to so with LB5 is make the IDE as scriptable as possible.

[Alyce] Would it be kind of like Brent's vivifire?

[Bwebmaster] So I could add menus and stuff using LB scripts?

[Carl] Yeah, some hooks would be there so you could add your own utilities to LB.

[Alyce] Macros, maybe?

[Carl] Some commands would be added (yet to be determined) which would give you access to information about the IDE, and ways to interface with it.

[Bwebmaster] So for instance, I could replace the existing icon editor with Alyce's?

[Carl] Hehe.

[Carl] Sure.

[Alyce] B, you can add TKNs to the run menu right now.

[Bwebmaster] well, it be great to just outright replace it

[Bwebmaster] No offense Carl

[Carl] In fact it would be sort of holy grail if we could actually write the LB editor in LB, right?

[Alyce] That would be quite interesting, Carl.

[Bwebmaster] Sounds like somthing in one of the

[Bwebmaster] 'not in this issue' part of the newsletter

[Carl] No, I'm not kidding.

[Bwebmaster] It was something like 'Carl to write new version of smalltalk in LB, and then write LB 5 in it'

[Carl] But I'm not sure we're going to do it either. Still...

[Alyce] You know, the lesson browser is way under-used.

[Carl] The first prototype of Smalltalk was actually written in BASIC. Really.

[Carl] That's an interesting point Alyce.

[Bwebmaster] Talk about irony...

[Bwebmaster] Hey, I actually use it for versioning

[Carl] What do you use for versioning?

[Alyce] You use the lesson browser for versioning?

[Bwebmaster] the lesson browser

[Carl] Oh. That's a fun idea.

[Bwebmaster] Yup, but LBA will replace it

[Alyce] You need to get Assist! Really, the versioning is my favorite tool in it.

[Carl] Yeah, I really need to get a copy of that too.

[Bwebmaster] I am thinking about putting the newsletters in lsn's for archiving

Dan enters this room

[Bwebmaster] Well I would get assist if it will hurry up and be released

[Alyce] Hey Dan!

[Bwebmaster] Hi dan

[Dan] Hey

[Carl] One thing I think is a feature that needs to be in LB5 is the ability to run it from the command line without a GUI, so you can use stdio for cgi scripting and other similar stuff.

[Carl] Of course the Mac prealpha does this already.

[Bwebmaster] Command-Line scripting with LB would be, um, intresting

[Dan] That would be nice

[Alyce] CGI scripting? That's a whole new area.

[Bwebmaster] Which CGI?

[Carl] It would open up a completely new range of applications for LB.

[Dan] Itd be easier than learning PHP and such

[Carl] common gateway interface.

[Bwebmaster] That it would

[Carl] It's used for web programming a lot.

[Bwebmaster] So I could intertwine CGI with LB?

[Bwebmaster] That could be great for web-based apps and web scripting

[Carl] You could use LB instead of Perl or other scripting languages.

[Alyce] Carl, do you mean LB would run on a server, and run scripts?

[Carl] Yes.

[Bwebmaster] Yay!

[Dan]