of a keyboard, I still haven't found anything close to the hard-contact type of keyboard mentioned in a previous column, but the Maxi-Switch keyboard used by Fortron is a definite cut-above the pure-mush feel of most clone keyboards.

The 386 computer is hardware-compatible with the AT: it will take all of the same hard disks, keyboards, power supplies, etc., as a standard AT.

You can call Fortron at 408–432–1191, to ask for the name of your nearest dealer. If your local dealer can't match the prices I've listed, you can contact me for the names of some their dealers who can.

On choosing a hard disk

The performance of a hard disk is determined by two characteristics: its access time, and its transfer rate. The access time tells you the average time required for the hard disk to find the file you want. The transfer rate tells you how fast the information can be transferred, once it's found. The hard disk I'm using is a Seagate ST251. This is a reasonably reliable, inexpensive hard disk, with an access time of 40 milliseconds — a satisfactory, but not earth-shaking speed for an AT- or 386-class machine. TeX, however, doesn't seem to care much about the access time of your hard disk: when I substituted a Priam hard disk, with its fast 28 ms access time, TeX's performance remained the same. I found that the other programs I use were also pretty much indifferent to the Seagate's slower access time. But if you do a lot of data-base work, or use other programs that have to scavenge all over your hard disk to find information in non-sequential order, your best bet would be the more-expensive Priam drive. (Users of the Cordata LP-300 driver may also find that they can get away with using a hard disk with a fast access time, such as the Priam, instead of the required RAM-disk. In fact, even the 40 ms Seagate seems to work.)

Priam drives are available in 45 Mb, 60 Mb, and 130 Mb versions. They have a reputation for reliability (almost a contradiction-in-terms when it comes to hard disks), and I've found the company to be responsive.

If many of your applications are disk-intensive, you might want to investigate the newer hard-disk controllers. These new controllers offer faster transfer rates, but require drives compatible with their new standards: RLL and SCSI (pronounced "scuzzy").

Because TeX accesses information on the hard disk in sequential order, I now work with a reduced number of buffers. My `config.sys` file contains the line 'buffers=17'. This leaves a bit more room for RAM-resident programs.

Queries

Request for Contributions to a New Publication

The increasing use of Desktop Publishing Systems (DPSs) is leading to the widespread appearance of appalling pieces of "design", perpetrated by poor software and by people without adequate training (often through no fault of their own).

I am collecting examples of these excresences both for my own use in a planned typographical design course and for publication in a sort of "Chamber of Horrors" book, if there are enough examples to make it really *bad*!

All contributions will be gratefully received and will be acknowleged in the publication (if it gets off the ground).

> Please send examples to:
> Peter Flynn
> Computer Bureau
> University College, Cork
> Ireland

If they can be sent electronically, my addresses are:
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> HEANET: CBTS8001@IRL.HEA.UCC.VAX1
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