SpeakEasy

SpeakEasy is similar to Chat in that it provides Telnet connections between your Alto and a variety of machines. It was developed in deference to Monroe County Data Network (MCDN) users who wanted easier file handling capabilities than the Chat typescript allowed them. It can be used to provide dumb terminal connections to any resource you would normally Chat with.

MCDN resources available through SpeakEasy include the Rochester Technical Computer Center (RTCC) Sigmas; TIMS Systems 68, 70, 71, 73; TYMNET; University of Rochester's Wilber; G.E. Network; I.P. Sharp; and CDC Cybernet. Of course, you can use SpeakEasy with Maxc, Ernestine, or any of the IFS servers.

Find the program SpeakEasy.Run on your local file server. It takes 65 Alto pages.

Getting In

SpeakEasy uses the screen as follows:
1. The black line at the top will tell you who your partner is, once you have made a connection.
2. The large area in the middle will show you your conversation.
3. The lower black band is where SpeakEasy asks you questions and gives you warnings.
4. Below the question / warning line you'll see what filters are in effect (usually none; see the "Filter" option under MenuSelections).
5. At the bottom is the menu of options that you can choose from during and between conversations.

SpeakEasy begins by asking you to choose a partner by name. That is, you'll see "Connect to:" on the lower black band. (For any of the MCDN resources, respond "MCDN".) If your chosen partner is unavailable, the connection attempt will time out in about 15 seconds, and you will be asked again to choose a Partner. If you prefer not to continue, simply respond with a carriage return; you will be asked if you want to quit (you'll see "Quit?" on the lower black band), and can do so by responding with a carriage return or by typing "Yes."

Once a successful connection is made, you can conduct your usual conversation with your partner and choose from the menu as you wish.

SpeakEasy does not attempt an automatic logon, because it is intended to talk to a wide variety of machines, and chances are good that your account name and password on an IBM370 are not the same as your account name and password on your local IFS or on your disk. SpeakEasy just isn't smart enough to know what you're calling yourself in each of your environments.

SpeakEasy does not let you give your partner's name on the command line, but you can type ahead. Instead of saying "**Speak Maxc**<cr>" you can type "**Speak**<cr>**Maxc**<cr>".

Hints and Bugs

If you have never used Chat or if you're having trouble, please note:

A. For any IFS server, read pp. 14-18 of the "Alto Non-programmer's Guide" in the <u>Alto Users Handbook.</u> This explains the executive available on an IFS through a Telnet connection. It is usually called the "Chat Executive," since Chat has been the primary means of accessing this process.
If you are an IFS user accustomed to responding to an error message (flashing screen and "?") with backspaces, you will find the display confusing. SpeakEasy tries to be smart about erasing rubbed out characters, but in this situation it looks dumb. It is better to respond to an IFS error message by re-typing the offending information or by hitting <del> and trying the whole command again.

B. For any MCDN resource,
1. Your response to the "Connect to: " prompt should be "MCDN," not "RTCC03" or "TIMS68," for example.
2. If you're going to talk to a Sigma, be sure your keyboard is locked in upper case.
3. Type the usual E's to get started and then continue just as you would for any MCDN connection.
4. Do not be discouraged by "timed out" messages; be persistent.
5. Closing an MCDN connection may take as long as 30 seconds; be patient.
6. Real backspaces (<bs>'s) will not go through to your MCDN partner at this time; they are intercepted and turned into <del>'s; <del>'s are intercepted and turned into <esc>-X's. There is presently no way to transmit a <bs> or a ^H to your Partner using SpeakEasy or Chat. (Makes it tough to use APL!) The problem is being addressed.

C. For connection to Ernestine (Ern), you will notice a delay of many seconds when the connection closes. For the moment, this is normal; please be patient.

If the scroll breaks:

There is an unfunny bug that apparently came in with the display stream package. On rare occasions, the scroll quits, and everything your partner says is written into the last line of the large middle window. If this happens to you, don't panic. **Your conversation is continuing normally**; your partner understands everything you are telling him, even though you can't easily read what you are typing or what your partner is saying. (If you are recording the conversation, your file is okay.) In this situation, it is easier on the nerves to conclude your activity as soon as possible, logoff, quit SpeakEasy, and restart SpeakEasy. There is no way to restore the display or the scroll except to quit and restart.

Menu Selections

General Commands

New Font allows you to change the display font for the large, middle window.   SpeakEasy prompts you for the name of an AL font on your disk and loads that font, if there is enough room. Once you have selected New Font, its window remains black until you deselect it. Deselecting it causes the display to return to its usual font, Clarity12.

Note: if you opt for Overstrike (see the Overstrike selection below), you should be using a fixed pitch font, such as Gacha10 or APL14. Use the New Font option to load a fixed pitch font.

The Quit option closes your connection to your partner, signs you off SpeakEasy and returns you to the Executive. If you simply want to stop talking to your current partner, say so in your partner's language (i.e., type "q" to an IFS, "OFF" to a Sigma, and so on). Then you are still in SpeakEasy, free to make new connections, reformat the screen, or whatever (see New Connection, New Font, and so on). Even if you want to get out of SpeakEasy, you should tell your partner in his language that you are ending your conversation before you bug the Quit option. If you fail to log off before exercising the Quit option, you may leave a detached job running or leave an open MCDN line to your account; the results can be disastrous for you.

The New Connection option lets you make a connection with a new partner. It is wise, however, to finish your current conversation properly before trying to make a new connection. If you were talking with Maxc or RTCC01, for example, you risk leaving a detached job running or exposing your files to damage when you do not log off properly.

Overstrike gives you a non-erasing backspace on your display. APL users, in particular, will benefit from this. Beware: only fixed pitch fonts look correct with a non-erasing backspace; you are allowed to Overstrike with any font you like, but you won't like the looks of things if you Overstrike with the standard font (Clarity12). Use the NewFont option (above) to convert to a fixed pitch font, such as APL14 or Gacha10.

Echo should be selected whenever you are talking to a non-echoplexing machine (e.g., an IBM such as TIMS68). The option allows you to see what you are typing to a non-echoplexing partner. Also, if you have selected the Record Conversation option and are talking to a non-echoplexing machine, you must exercise the Echo option if you want your half of the conversation to be recorded.

File Handling

Record Conversation starts a file on your Alto disk that records everything you see on the screen from the time you select the option until you deselect it. The file is referred to as a "session record" throughout this document. Because you can select and deselect the option as often as you wish, you can make a copy of as much or as little of your conversation as you like, and you can make any number of files as you work. You give your own names to the files.

The option is useful if you are pulling several text files onto your disk (for Bravo editing or for electronic mail forwarding, e.g.), particularly if you want to keep the files separate. Many non-BravoX users select this option to record interactions that they want to include in documentation.

It is your responsibility to see that there is sufficient room on your disk for any session records you make. If you are concerned that space is running out, remember that deselecting the option will close the file right away; there is no need to panic and Swat.

IBM and Sigma users are advised to filter <lf>'s and <del>'s from their session records (see the Filter option below).

You will notice that bells (^G's) and rubouts generally are not entered into the session record. Bells cause the screen to flash. Rubbed out characters are, in most cases, erased from the screen.

Output a File sends a file from your Alto disk to your partner, character by character, removing Bravo formatting as it is encountered. The window for Output File will remain black until the file transfer is complete.

The option is useful for transfering text files back to your partner and for sending command files.

To stop a file transfer in midstream, deselect Output File. Beware: there is often considerable delay between the time the file characters leave your disk and the time they appear on your screen. It is "impossible" to judge your place in the file when you deselect Output File to stop the transfer. You are advised, if you want to send only part of a file to your partner, to make a temporary Alto file ahead of time that contains only what you want to send.

Sigma users who want to copy Alto files into their accounts are advised to give the PCL command "C ME OVER filename" and then to bug the Output File option. Remember to close the file by typing <esc>-F (after providing the final <cr>, if necessary). Using Edit or Build instead of PCL is discouraged, since most files are likely to have at least one blank line, and blank lines tell Edit or Build to stop their operation; subsequent lines are interpreted as TEL commands, and disaster may result. Warning: if your file contains control characters (other than Bravo formatting), you may have trouble using PCL to copy it to your Sigma account; in this case, you should create a lmn that will read transparently from the terminal and record in the desired file.

Filter allows you to screen unwanted characters from your display and from your session record. When you choose this option, SpeakEasy will prompt you for the characters you want to filter and will show you the characters just above the menu. Type in the characters to be filtered and end with a Q. (Yes, this means you cannot filter a Q, but you can filter an <esc> and a <cr>.) There is no need to filter bells (^G's); bells get special handling when they come from your partner; they cause the screen to flash and are not recorded.

The filters currently in effect are always shown on the line above the menu. You can reset your choice of filters at any time by reselecting the option. If you make a mistake typing in the characters, typing a <bs> will add a <bs> to your choice of filters; in that case, you should abort the attempt with a Q and rebug the option to try again. If you want to return to no filters (the default) simply respond to the prompt by typing Q.

Sigma users, for example, will find <lf>'s and <del>'s sprinkled throughout any session records they make; selecting the Filter option and responding to the prompt by hitting the <lf> key, the <del> key, and a Q will filter those two characters from their conversations.