

Needs Assessment

There are various pressures facing the Sinclair community at present:

- Various key websites are owned by individuals with no succession plan for the site or domain in the event of something happening to the owner of either the domain name or site itself.
- The Sinclair QL Wiki needs an overhaul to increase the information available and to attract new people as contributors. It also needs a new domain name – at the moment it is stored as a sub-directory on a commercial website which gives people the (wrong) impression that it is not a community project but a commercial undertaking.
- The Sinclair QL Homepage contains a large amount of public domain and freeware titles, but outside of the QL Forums and QL users list, there appears to be a lack of knowledge about the Sinclair QL Homepage and the wealth of software which is available for free download through that site – potentially due to the site lacking a QL related domain name, but there has also been criticism that the site lacks details on each program and screen shots etc
- Quanta, the Sinclair QL user group, is diminishing in numbers and faces an uphill task in finding those willing to stand as committee members as its existing committee are less able to spend the time required on the site.
- Much of the Quanta library contains public domain and freeware programs which may be available on the Sinclair QL Homepage, or could be missing.
- The Quanta library also contains a wealth of programs and routines which were donated to the library on the basis that they would only be made available to Quanta members.
- Key websites, such as the World of Spectrum site, remains unfinished since the redesign and transfer of ownership to Lee Fogarty, because the onus is placed on one or two individuals to run, improve and maintain those websites in their spare time
- There is a lack of key hardware documentation in particular, for the Sinclair QL, Cambridge Z88, ZX80 and ZX81 (and to a lesser extent, the ZX Spectrum).
- Although a large amount of Sinclair QL software has been preserved, again, the preservation has been left to one or two individuals (who have the software mainly as a collection), and there is no impetus to track down copyright holders and obtain their consent to these titles being made available as freeware.

Again, there is no succession plan in place to retain that preserved software in the event of something happening to the owner, which would (in the best case scenario) mean the original collections being auctioned off to the highest bidder, potentially with an electronic backup.

- Access to QL software on the internet is further hindered by the lack of a common storage format – files can be in a zip format (for unzipping on a PC and attaching to q-emulator or other specific emulator), a QL zip format (which requires unzipping from within the QL or an emulator), a Microdrive image (.mdv), a disk image (.img) or even a QPC win image. It is not always clear which format has been used or which emulator / QL hardware this is suitable for.
- There is a general issue that existing sites etc are seen as “X’s project” and in many instances, X is then criticised for not adding certain information, programs etc to their

project, without any actual help being offered – partly due to a lack of external ability to add to these sites other than via the website owner.

Recommended Solution

- Create a non-profit organisation in the nature of a limited company which would run a single portal and would own the domain names and various key sites which currently exist. This would include as a minimum:
 - Quanta Website
 - Sinclair ZX World (ZX81 / ZX80 Forums)
 - Z88 World (Z88 Forums)
 - Sinclair QL Wiki (new domain name would be required)
 - Sinclair QL Forums
 - ZX-Team forums, wiki etc
 - Sinclair QL GitHub
 - Sinclair QL Homepage
 - SBASIC / SuperBASIC Online Reference Manual
 - Potentially the Z88 Development site, QL-Users mailing list, World of Spectrum. QLSP project from Urs' site.
- The organisation would need to be funded through donations – potentially a form of kickstarter – monies would be required to pay for site development, hosting, domain names and ongoing administration.
- The portal would offer one log in / registration process for people to access the Z88, ZX81, Sinclair QL, ZX Spectrum forums and the QL Wiki, as well as new areas of the site
- The portal itself would need development and potentially the QL Wiki would need to be converted to a different Wiki format, with all links updated to the new domain, and all images moved across from the existing RWA Adventures website (and any external images)
- Sinclair ZX World and Z88 World need to be checked and updated to eliminate any references to rwap-services.co.uk/z88/forums or rwap-services.co.uk/ZX80_ZX81/forums
- A new upload site would need to be developed, which allows for the uploader to specify:
 - a) Which machine upload relates to
 - b) Whether it is hardware or software related
 - c) Copyright status – freeware / public domain / shareware / commercial
 - d) Upload program files (need to determine supported formats for each computer), supporting screenshots, documentation and a short summary of the program / what it is about – potentially with a link to a wiki entry if any.
 - e) Copyright holder details (if known), along with author and publisher if relevant

Users would also need a portal to view and navigate through the uploaded documentation (similar to the existing World of Spectrum archive) and would have free access to download anything not marked as commercial.

Commercial items would be stored on the organisations servers and the organisation would need to spend time and money in tracking down copyright holders in order to obtain their permission for these items to be released as freeware.

Potentially, the organisation could offer paid for downloads of commercial items (subject to approval by the copyright holder and any royalty payment), as a means of helping pay for

the ongoing operation of the organisation. However, this would need to be given careful consideration, due to the impact of the e-services taxation, where the organisation may need to register for VAT and other taxes in several countries around the world and account for tax on any sale to individual customers.

That said, it would be a useful service to assist authors of new software wishing to offer paid-for downloads (eg for new software written for the ZX Spectrum Vega+ or ZX Spectrum Next where physical copies are less likely to be sold). This could also be used as a means of leverage to getting further titles made available for download once again (such as the titles on the ZX Spectrum which are currently distribution denied).