Power Tools II, utilities to enhance Applesoft

By John V. Lombardi

Fortunately, the programmers in Applesoft, for there is a richness of tools. Everywhere we look in the magazines and the computer catalogs, there are ready-made utilities designed to make Applesoft work the way we all wish it would work.

These utilities fall into two general categories. The first are collections of routines written in Applesoft that you can incorporate into your program to solve special input, output or screen formatting problems. The second are machine-language routines that add special versions of Applesoft commands or entirely new commands to this BASIC's vocabulary. The Programmer's Power Tools II belongs to the latter category.

FEATURES: As is the case with many similar collections, Power Tools II is an amorphous utility. That means that its special features can be invoked from within an Applesoft program through use of the ampersand vector.

Scattered throughout the magazines devoted to Apple users are numerous amorphous utilities, many of them designed to accomplish the same things as this one. The virtue of having the Power Tools II instead of many of the others, however, is that it has been thoroughly tested and is an integrated package.

Power Tools II has routines to allow you to print numbers and dates in formats that include decimals, plus (+) or minus (-) signs, commas and other pretty print features. In a more advanced BASIC, you would accomplish this with the Print Using command. In Applesoft you need something like Power Tools II to get this convenience.

Then there is an input-anything routine. Long the bane of Applesoft programmers, Applesoft BASIC did not

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Infoworld
VEDIT, text editor for CP/M operating systems

By Tom Donahue

VEDIT is a general-purpose text editor that is available in a wide variety of media and formats. It is available for CP/M-80 and 86, IBM, and Seattle Computer Products 86-DOS, as well as the IBM Personal Computer. For this review I used VEDIT with a Lobo Max-80 running under CP/M-86.2.2.

FEATURES: A good text editor is an indispensable part of a microcomputer system. VEDIT is a flexible text editor and serves as a day-to-day text processing tool.

VEDIT calls upon two principal modes. First is the Visual mode, in which the program works much like any screen-oriented text editor. You can key in text, insert, delete and edit characters, and you can move the cursor around within the text as a whole. You can check on the display exactly what the document contains. It makes it easy to compose letters, forms and the like because you can save a document just as an editor.

Though VEDIT is not a true word processor, it does have several features in the Visual mode that allow you to use it for limited word-processing functions. For example, unlike most editors, VEDIT allows you to print text on the line printer. When using this feature, however, you must specify the beginning and ending positions within the text file you want printed. This is especially convenient when you are using VEDIT to enter programs. You can just print a small portion of the entire program instead of the whole thing.

Another word-processing feature allows you to adjust both the left and right margins of your text. VEDIT also has a word-wrap ability. Anytime you exceed the right margins, VEDIT starts a new physical line automatically and appends a carriage return to the end of the previous line.

Finally, VEDIT gives you the ability for some limited paragraph formatting. While this feature is not as sophisticated as the formatting and proportional spacing of a true word processor, it does allow you to set left and right margins and force a paragraph to fit within them.

VEDIT takes you through the key layout that you use in the Visual mode. This means that you can use VEDIT, page 66.

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bud gestion garbage-collection routine that refines the Free command from Applesoft to do a more efficient collection and to allow you to check whether or not you really need to clear out your string space.

PERFORMANCE: These routines work very much as described in the manual. They operate on a par with most of the other sortamund utilities that have lived in the operating system. Their virtue, of course, is that they are quite flexible and versatile and form a reasonably coherent package.

EASE OF USE: No package of this kind can be said to be easy to use unless you are a reasonably proficient Applesoft programmer. You'll have trouble making this package do its stuff.

In part, these difficulties occur because the routines expect to find data in certain forms, say integer numbers, even though the final output might be in decimal form. Likewise, the routines might want strings when you had thought to use numbers.

None of these really detracts from the usefulness of the routines, but, in total, they point to your need to know how to get the right data in the right place at the right time.

The machine-language routines must reside in memory, on the same disk as the Applesoft program, which calls them. CR Software provides lots of information about how to manage possible memory conflicts. You must get permission, however, if you expect to incorporate these routines into any programs you make for more than five users.

ERROR HANDLING: In part, of course, the program cannot handle any errors you make when setting up these routines. What is especially nice about these routines, however, is that they allow you to create programs that will handle errors well.

DOCUMENTATION: The manual that comes with Power Tools is excellent. It is clear, concise and full of examples. It also is clear about limitations, peculiarities and problems that you might encounter, and how you can use these routines. The disk has a number of demonstration programs that are helpful and enable you to see how the routines can best be used.

SUMMARY: If you do lots of Applesoft programming and don't already have these utilities or something very much like them, you are wasting a lot of time. Power Tools is easy to use, covers most of the important features missing in Applesoft and makes your programming tasks much easier. All in all, I think this is a good, solid package.