Review: Volkswriter Deluxe

BY JOHN LOMBARDI
Contributor

With word-processing programs appearing and reappearing at a fantastic rate, it's not surprising to see Volkswriter Deluxe, another incarnation of the original and successful Volkswriter. This version includes added features and special capabilities, but the program looks and feels much the same as the first edition. With its new features it approaches the standards of top microcomputer-based word processors such as WordStar.

Word processing consists of two important functions: editing and formatting. When you edit, you are primarily concerned with the content of the document. You enter, rearrange words, sentences and paragraphs, determine section titles, and consider chapter divisions. Once you get the text the way you want it, you then focus on the formatting, or how the document will look on the printed page. Issues of spacing, placement, boldfacing, underlining and the like all become paramount.

Volkswriter's editing functions are fast, clear and comprehensive. The program can handle documents of up to one megabyte in size if you have enough disk space to hold the overflow from memory. The program uses whatever memory is in the system and then keeps the rest of the text on disk.

Practically anything you may want to do while editing text is possible. The range of editing features is almost complete. Though you can delete by word, line, block and from the cursor position to the beginning of a line, you can't delete from the cursor position back to the beginning of a line. Lines cannot be joined by deleting the end-of-line character; instead, you are required to reformat the paragraph. Indents work effortlessly. The tabs are easy to set and clear, though you can't tab from right to left. There is no hyphenation facility.

Volkswriter Deluxe allows you to move the cursor over the text rapidly and effectively. Although you can't insert page markers, you can move line by line, scroll through the text a half screen at a time, or go to the beginning or end of the document or to specific page numbers. This is more than adequate for most uses.

Block operations of the cut-and-paste variety are effected quickly and easily. To make multiple moves or copies of the same block you must reset the block markers each time.

Find-and-replace operations work well. You must specify an exact match (including uppercase and lowercase letters), and you can only go forward in the file. Once you specify a search string, the search can be repeated as often as you like until you reset the search string. If you're in the middle of a file, you can find and replace to the end of file and then continue from the beginning.

All editing operations in Volkswriter Deluxe use function keys, sometimes in combination with other keys. Volkswriter does not use control keys directly for editing. The argument over control-key versus function-key editing often generates more heat than light, but it's probably fair to say that whatever you use the most will seem to be the best. Some fast typists prefer the control keys because they are easier to manage on the run. If you insist on control-key editing, this program is not for you.

Scrolling, screen re-display and other cosmetic features of this word-processing program work cleanly, predictably and fast. When you come to the end of the last line on the screen while typing, Volkswriter jumps up half a screen and continues. This happens so fast that it can be a bit disconcerting at first.

Line 25 on the screen displays line, column and page numbers along with the name of the last line file accessed by Volkswriter. A minimal Help screen provides reminders of what each function key does. It is not possible to determine how much disk space is available for storage, how large the current document has become in bytes or the length of the file in characters.

Volkswriter can manage two kinds of files. Its word-processing files contain both the text and some information used in formatting the document for printing. Volkswriter can also produce standard ASCII text files that are used for program coding and the preparation of data for use by another program.

Editing often leaves spaces in the text. To clean up the screen, Volkswriter reforms paragraphs with a Reform key. This process must be initiated for each paragraph, and the reforming works reasonably quickly. As there is no repeat function, you must reform each paragraph manually if you want to change your margins.

You can determine the appearance of a printed document in three or four different ways. Most importantly, you can create a special file that lists the built-in features of the printer that you wish to have

---

Summary: Volkswriter Deluxe is a top-notch word-processing program that has excellent editing, strong formatting, good user documentation and tutorials, modest on-line help, an adequate list-processing function, and excellent keyboard-printer customization routines. You must have a good deal of knowledge about your printer in order to use the program well.

Product details: List price, $295. Available for IBM PC or compatibles running DOS 1.1 or 2.0. Requires 128K random-access memory, two disk drives, printer. Published by Lifetree Software, Inc., 411 Pacific Street, Suite 315, Monterey, CA 93940, (408) 373-4718.
Review: VersaForm

BY GIOVANNI PERRONE

VersaForm is a data-base-management system that is both powerful and easy to learn. It takes advantage of your familiarity with the paper forms and handling procedures, permitting you to automate forms, work-sheets, file cards, ledgers and reports.

To use VersaForm, you start with an existing or desired paper form. Then you duplicate the form on your computer screen, making provisions for error checking and cross-referencing at the same time. Once the form is duplicated, you enter information into the computer by simply filling in the blanks. The information on your form is automatically stored for future use in the VersaForm data base. Now you can print the information directly on preprinted forms or create new ones. You can also extract the information from your data base and produce any type of report.

To enable you to create forms on the screen, VersaForm provides a screen formatter for designing and editing forms. It combines this with a data-entry program that includes advanced features such as forms filing, table look-up, calculation and range checking. There is also a data-base module that handles the complexities of storing information: a report generator that collects and sorts data, formats reports and works with word-processing systems.