Before the personal...
on control-key editing, this program is not for you.

Scrolling, screen redisplay 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, Volkswagen 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 file accessed by Volkswagen. 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.

Volkswagen can manage two kinds of files. Its word-processing files contain both the text and some information used in formatting the document for printing. Volkswagen 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, Volkswagen reformats 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 reformat 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 important, you can create a special file that lists the built-in features of the printer that you wish to have automatically activated when you print. Standard line lengths, character spacing, line spacing, boldfacing, single or continuous lines and the like can all be selected here. You can invent any number of variations on these formats, and you can arrange to attach the appropriate format to specific documents whenever you edit or print that document.

Volkswagen Deluxe expects you to be able to visualize some of the formatting characteristics and does not show them on the screen. There is no screen representation for justification, proportional spacing or line spacing, though the length of screen lines takes proportionally spaced character widths into account. Volkswagen only shows things on the screen that affect the location or appearance in a way that requires operator attention. If you use justification, you don't need to see what it looks like on the screen because justification doesn't change the number of words per line, only the spacing of characters on the line. Page breaks are always visible on-screen.

A second way to affect appearance is by setting boldfacing, shadow printing, strike through, underlining and superscripts and subscripts in the editor itself. You can also select up to four different fonts from within the editor, should your printer have the capability.

Appearance of the text can also be affected by the insertion of dot commands. These define the Print Formatting program to implement headers and footers, set page numbers, insert lines or change formats in mid-document. The range of dot commands and print time formatting available from within Volkswagen is adequate for most applications, though not as comprehensive as that available in WordStar. Volkswagen Deluxe easily manages multiple-line headers and footers, and will place this text left, right, centered or on alternating sides of the page. You can also chain files and print particular pages. You can print multiple copies simply by changing the same file in a loop.

Volkswagen allows you to manipulate the printer directly by entering special control characters into the text. You can also insert a dot command that requires Volkswagen Deluxe's formatter to print all subsequent text Verbatim without interpreting any control characters.

The combination of all these features produces a formatter capability that is flexible and powerful. The specific formatting features available to you, however, will depend in part on the special intelligence built into your printer. For example, Volkswagen can usually manage underlining, strike through, boldface print, superscripts and subscripts, and justification on printers that have no built-in word-processing intelligence but do have flexible line and character spacing. The program will not give you shadow print on such a printer (unlike WordStar).

The package has a special program called Configure that allows you to set it to what printer you are using so that Volkswagen can take advantage of its features. Unfortunately, the exceptionally useful features of this configuration program are virtually undocumented in the materials that come with the program. With all the expertise the Volkswagen people have with printer drivers, it's a peculiar anomaly that the description of their own program's printer setup is so deficient.

The feature that makes this word-processing program indispensable for specialized applications is the ability to customize the program. Volkswagen lets you set up your keyboard and printer any way you choose. This means that you can have your keyboard set up to work with foreign-language characters or rearrange the keyboard to suit your writing style. Doing this does not require much effort on your part beyond careful attention to the code numbers for each key and each displayed character.

Volkswagen Deluxe expects you to know a lot of programming knowledge. It does not tell you anything about your printer in order to use the program well.

Product details: List price: $295. Available for IBM PC or PC compatibles running DOS 3.2 or higher. Requires 128K random-access memory; two disk drives; printer. Published by Lifetree Software, Inc., 411 Pacific Street, Monterey, CA 93940; (408) 373-4718.
DSN/Link: communications package for the HP-150

BY STEVE MANN

DSN/Link, from Hewlett-Packard, is an excellent communications package with a variety of capabilities. This program is designed primarily to enable you to link two HP-150 personal computers. You can connect an HP-150 to an HP 3000 minicomputer. It is flexible enough to allow you to connect an HP-150 to almost any type of machine, large or small. The hookup may be either local or through a modem to a geographically remote system.

Why would you want to hook a Hewlett-Packard personal computer to another machine? Well, there are several possible reasons. First of all, the HP-150 can function as an intelligent terminal and, at the same time, let you use all of its computer capabilities. Even more important, depending on the type of machine at the other end of the cable (typically called the host), you can transfer program and data files from the HP-150 to the host and vice versa.

You must install DSN/Link on the HP-150 so that it executes under Personal Applications Manager (P.A.M.), the 150's MS-DOS command shell. Once this is done, the program has five basic functions: File Transfer, Command Entry, File Management, Data Logging and Help.

File Transfer lets you move information between the two computers at a time. Command Entry permits you to enter one of about 30 commands directly to the HP-150; these commands control certain aspects of the communication connection. File Management gives you access to all of the HP-150's file- and directory-manipulation capabilities. Data Logging records your conversation with the host on either a printer or a disk file. Finally, the Help function gives you a brief description of each command.

This product is, in fact, supplied as two ports — DSN/Link and DSN/Monitor. When you link two HP-150s, DSN/Link runs on one and DSN/Monitor on the other. DSN/Monitor sets up the second system as a "slave" to the first. The Link station initiates file transfers and can access the Monitor station's disk directory. The HP-150, on the other hand, primarily responds to commands.

DSN/Link is designed to work with the HP-150's asynchronous serial ports. This means that you cannot use it to connect an HP-150 to a VAX system that uses synchronous communications, but you can use DSN/Link with almost all micros and minicomputers, except larger IBM machines. This product works equally well with local, direct-cabled connections and remote systems accessed with Hewlett-Packard's internal modem for the HP-150.

Setting up DSN/Link is easy. You must follow several steps to configure the HP-150's serial port so that the HP-150 and the host machine can communicate properly. If you are connecting two systems locally with a serial station, you may have some problems unless you have a universal RS-232 cable. DSN/Link's documentation does not include any technical information about the signal connections for the HP-150's RS-232 serial ports. This information isn't included with the HP-150's documentation either. Fortunately, you do not need to know this information if you use DSN/Link.

In sum, this is a unique word-processing program with excellent editing, strong formatting, good user documentation and tutorials, modest on-line help, an adequate list-processing function and good keyboard/printer customization routines. The program is distributed without irritating copy-protection schemes and is easily installed on a hard-disk system. Lifetree, the distributor of the program, provides exceptionally helpful and competent assistance to registered owners.

Adachi mainframes.

DSN/Link has excellent error handling. The program is structured in such a way that, unless you are using the special commands, it's difficult to make errors. If you incorrectly enter one of the approximately 30 special commands, the program's error handling is comprehensive. The messages are clear and understandable, leaving you with little doubt as to the nature of the problem.

From the Link system. Both stations can send simple messages back and forth.

When you use DSN/Link to connect your HP-150 to another type of system — either a Hewlett-Packard minicomputer or another computer — the HP-150 functions as an intelligent terminal. You can enter legal host commands but still use all of the HP-150's personal computer capabilities. If the host system has special software capability, you can also transfer