

WORD PROCESSING AND THE OFFICE

SELECTING THE RIGHT PACKAGE

Corporate Users Face Difficult Choices

BY HANK BANNISTER, INFOWORLD STAFF

As more and more vendors target their programs specifically to the business user, selecting the right word processing program for the corporate environment is becoming a highly complex task. "It was a difficult decision, and there isn't a perfect package," says Steven Rush of Merrill Lynch Capital Markets Investment Banking Division, in New York, of the evaluation process he undertook.

After looking at a large number of word processing packages, Rush's division eventually decided to standardize on Word Perfect and to purchase approximately 500 packages through a site-license agreement last fall. "We looked at the whole range from Multimate, Samna Word III, Displaywrite 3, Microsoft Word, Wordstar and Wordstar 2000, Volkswriter, Officewriter, and even Framework," he says.

As vendors fight to improve the features of their word processing programs, corporate buyers are faced with the dilemma of trying to standardize their software while at the same time remaining open to new technology. "In some places a word processor is just for secretaries, but here the package is in the hands of secretaries and power users as well as professionals just dabbling with memos," Rush says. "Additionally, we had to account for the fact that some users had two floppy drive systems, some had IBM XT's, and some had IBM AT's."

Rush says that three factors influenced his decision to select Word Perfect: speed/efficiency, ease of use, and full features.

Nevertheless, he emphasizes that a number of people will continue to use Wordstar and Multimate, despite the fact that the majority of users will standardize on Word Perfect.

Micro Managers See Open Market

An informal survey of corporate micro managers makes it clear that Multimate is the most widely used package in the corporate environment, but that the market is still open to a wide range of alternatives. At the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, the organization's document production facilities are designed around Wang minicomputers, according to a source at the institution. Although the organization has a less formal approach to software and hardware purchasing than many corporations due to the independent funding of different projects, micro-computer word processing is almost completely dominated by the Multimate word processor. According to the staff member, the major reasons for choosing Multimate were its interface, which is similar to the Wang system, and file compatibility. Almost all official documents need to be archived in the Wang system and outputted in their final form through the Wang system.

A neighboring but very different organization in Atlanta, the Turner Broadcasting System Inc., has also standardized on the Multimate package, in spite of the fact that the company does not have its word processing operations around

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Top Packages Differ On Important Features

BY JOHN LOMBARDI, REVIEW BOARD

Evaluating word processing programs can take more skill, time, and energy than learning how to use them. Selecting word processing software for an office involves a careful consideration of software performance as well as skills and experience of the staff, type and volume of work to be performed, and preferences of users.

Selecting a word processing program works best through a process of elimination. As you survey the vast array of excellent programs, you should try to find good reasons to eliminate programs from consideration. When you reach a point where you can't find anything wrong or unnecessary about two or three programs, then you can begin evaluating and testing these survivors.

Although all word processing programs have the same general purpose — taking words into the computer, permitting their change and rearrangement, and printing them out on paper — they use one of two different models that involve fundamental differences in approach.

Page-oriented word processing programs organize our words, sentences, and paragraphs into pages. The user works with page-sized chunks of text. When we want to move from one part of the document to another part, the program retrieves pages from the hard or floppy disk and stores others. When we reach the end of a page, we often need to tell the program

where to make the page break.

This model of word processing fits neatly into the mind set of the accomplished typist who is used to rolling one page into the typewriter, typing the text, finishing the page, and rolling in another one. When something needs to be changed, the typist will find the appropriate page, reinsert it into

the typewriter and make the corrections or additions. This works faster

and better with a computer word processing system, but the basic procedure is the same.

Document-oriented word processing systems, unlike their page-oriented brethren, envision the text as a long, unbroken roll of paper, scrolling from beginning to end through the computer screen window. The focus is on the document, the most important elements are words, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters, not pages. Although all of the document-oriented systems we will look at provide indications of page breaks, they allow smooth, uninterrupted examination and revision of text across page boundaries with practically no interruption other than a line across the screen indicating where a page break will occur.

Most word processing experts agree that page-oriented systems work well for tasks that involve the final preparation of copy originated by someone else (either written or dictated). These systems focus on preparing good looking pages rather than on helping you compose

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InfoWorld

Top Packages

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meaningful and elegantly phrased text. Writers who need to move rapidly from one part of a document to another for revisions tend to prefer document-oriented programs.

Page-Oriented Word Processors

Our sample of quality page-oriented word processors includes Multimate, OfficeWriter, and Displaywrite. Each of these programs has been issued in various editions, revisions, and levels. As mature products, they have received strong market acceptance.

Programs in this class copy the operations of dedicated word processing systems originally designed to replace typewriters in business offices. IBM and Wang have the honor of being the most imitated word processing systems, with IBM copying its Displaywriter dedicated word processor with Displaywrite and Wang's word processing system enjoying the flattery of two clones, Multimate and OfficeWriter.

For this report, we looked at Multimate Advantage 3.60 from Multimate International Corp. of East Hartford, Connecticut. It is the most powerful version of the Multimate series. It comes with an add-on card file data manager and a sophisticated graphics integrator that puts graphics images into a Multimate-prepared text document for printing on dot-matrix or laser printers. Multimate Advantage faithfully copies the screen appearance and style of operations of dedicated Wang word processing equipment, systems very popular in business offices before the microcomputer word processing revolution arrived.

Multimate Advantage relies on function keys for most of its word processing operations and delivers an impressive array of features and tools. A massive number of function key combinations produce the impressive flexibility and power characteristic of the program, which includes

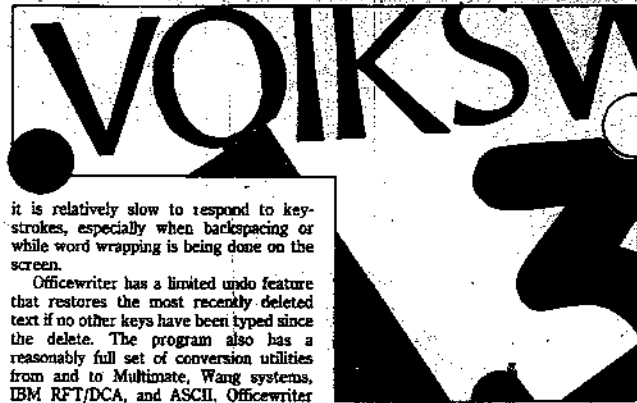
effective document assembly, keyboard macros, alternate foreign language character sets, mail list processing, and data file management, as well as traditional editing and formatting capabilities.

It is a rigorously page-oriented program, enforcing an abrupt jump when crossing page boundaries and insisting that the operator pay close attention to page length. Users find this program an outstanding selection for offices where operators switch between Wang equipment and microcomputer-based word processing. It is also an excellent choice where documents must be assembled from boilerplate files, because its tools to accomplish this task are quite good. But for composing original text and revising complex documents that require moving blocks of text from one place to another, Multimate is less graceful than other systems.

In the category of extra capabilities, Multimate allows multiline headers and footers, a maximum of eight-line footnotes at the bottom of the page only, simple addition and subtraction in tables, and excellent capability to handle up to eight columns of text per page. There is a good spelling program and a thesaurus. Multimate Advantage will convert its documents into standard ASCII format for transfer to other systems. Multimate also handles conversion between its own internal file structure and the IBM RFT/DCA (Revisable Form Text/Document Content Architecture) format as well as a conversion for stand-alone Wang word processing systems. There is no undo command, however, and Multimate Advantage does not provide windows for editing more than one document at a time.

OfficeWriter 4.0 from Office Solutions Inc. of Madison, Wisconsin, implements another Wang imitation prompted by the success of Multimate. OfficeWriter has most of the same features and feel of Multimate and the parent Wang systems, with the same virtues and defects. However, OfficeWriter is somewhat smoother in operation, has equivalent features in most areas, and offers enhancements in others.

In addition to the Wanglike menus and function key orientation, OfficeWriter has a full set of editing features and formatting power. Virtually identical to Multimate in word processing power, OfficeWriter supports up to three columns of text per page and headers and footers with up to six lines of text. Footnotes can be placed on the same page or collected at the end of the document. Because OfficeWriter keeps the document in memory, it moves between pages with much more grace and facility than Multimate. Like Multimate, however,



it is relatively slow to respond to keystrokes, especially when backspacing or while word wrapping is being done on the screen.

OfficeWriter has a limited undo feature that restores the most recently deleted text if no other keys have been typed since the delete. The program also has a reasonably full set of conversion utilities from and to Multimate, Wang systems, IBM RFT/DCA, and ASCII. OfficeWriter does not include the graphics and card file database manager available with Multimate Advantage.

The other major dedicated word processing program is Displaywrite 3 1.00 from IBM Personal Computer Software Division, in Boca Raton, Florida. Given the success of its Displaywriter word processing system, it is no surprise to find IBM producing a version of that software for its IBM PC. Displaywrite comes in three versions: Displaywrite 1, 2, and 3. We're concerned here with the full-feature large version called Displaywrite 3. Page-oriented like its major competitors, Displaywrite 3 enforces a concentration on page size and layout that easily matches Multimate's approach, although the program appears to work slightly more gracefully. Provided with a reasonably full complement of tools, Displaywrite 3 is somewhat less complex than Multimate Advantage and about on a par with OfficeWriter. It lacks a conversion utility for Wang or Wang clones but handles the IBM RFT/DCA conversion easily.

Displaywrite 3 allows footnotes at the bottom of the page and extending across page boundaries, foreign and scientific language support, and good math capability, but it supports only five printers directly. The program comes with complete technical information for managing other printers and for adapting to other computing environments.

Like Multimate, Displaywrite 3 stores its documents on disk a page at a time and keeps only a page in memory. Consequently, typing, moving, or working with text across page boundaries results in delays slightly noticeable with a hard disk but more intrusive with floppy disk systems. Displaywrite 3 has excellent document assembly facilities, manages multiple columns of text, and has a variety of utilities for adapting database files to a format usable by its list processing capability. As an IBM product, the program manuals contain excellent information about specific technical details matching this program to particular IBM microcomputer products, including keyboard layouts, screen displays, and printer characteristics.

All three of these dedicated word

processing emulators suffer from complex menu and command structures. These might irritate the writer concentrating on content more than the secretary who is primarily concerned with final appearance. Much of the benefit of the well-organized nature of these programs is lost when used on floppy disk drive machines. The elaborate system for keeping track of documents with names, descriptions, and the like are less effective when using floppies that can hold only a few documents at best.

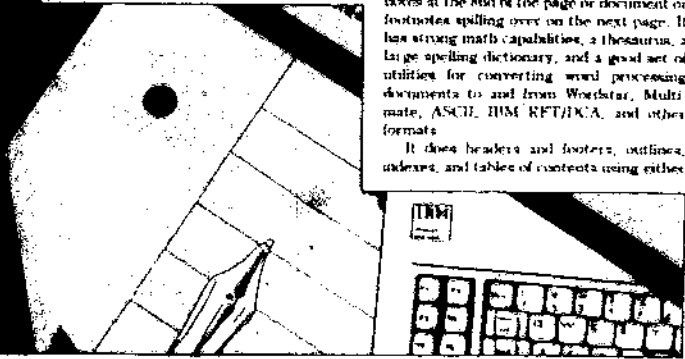
Because of their size and complexity, the programs require disk switching, a tedious process. We recommend these offerings to departments and businesses with large secretarial pools, some involvement with dedicated word processors (Wang or IBM), and microcomputers with hard disks. Under such conditions, the page orientation may be an advantage, especially when there is rapid turnover in personnel. All three of these can perform excellent-quality word processing, and a choice between them could turn on personal preferences or availability of a special feature.

Document-Oriented Programs

In some ways, the document-oriented word processing systems offer greater variety than their page-oriented counterparts. Not being tied to a dedicated word processing model, these programs offer a wider range of features and considerably different approaches to the word processing task.

Word Perfect 4.1 from Satellite Software International, in Orem, Utah, has garnered a remarkable collection of rave reviews from computer publications, and a careful comparison of functions demonstrates the basis for this reputation. Word Perfect has a phenomenal range of editing and formatting features, along with a full complement of special capabilities. It will handle multiple text columns either in parallel mode for scripts or "snaked" as needed for newsletters. It provides footnotes at the end of the page or document or footnotes spilling over on the next page. It has strong math capabilities, a thesaurus, a large spelling dictionary, and a good set of utilities for converting word processing documents to and from Wordstar, Multimate, ASCII, IBM RFT/DCA, and other formats.

It does headers and footers, outlines, indexes, and tables of contents using either



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Arabic or roman numerals. It has a full undo facility that returns as much as a page mistakenly deleted. It supports almost 200 different printers and can chain files for printing. The program supports scientific and foreign character sets. Word Perfect has good document assembly, excellent list processing, and the capability to work on two different documents at the same time in different windows. There is a superior sort facility that can handle line, block, and paragraph sorts of virtually any length.

Text is held in memory, and text larger than memory is spilled to disk file. Movement about the document is quick and smooth, insertion is fast and effective, and typing delays almost never occur. From practically every perspective, this is a fine product. Although not as good at managing large numbers of documents as Multimate, Displaywrite, or Officewriter, we would nonetheless recommend this product for most environments where page-oriented word processing is not required.

Among its document-oriented competitors, one of the most closely watched products is Wordstar 2000 from Micropro International Corp. of San Rafael, California. Inheritor of a proud name once synonymous with state-of-the-art word processing, this is the successor product to the ubiquitous Wordstar.

Wordstar 2000 Plus, Release 2.0, which we looked at, is a complex product — large, powerful, and somewhat cumbersome, using over 2 megabytes of disk space for the program files alone. Although it is possible to use this system on a floppy disk-based computer, it is not recommended. Not only does the program perform slowly in that environment, the frequent disk swapping required irritates the user and inhibits efficient use of the program.

Notwithstanding these characteristics, Micropro's Wordstar 2000 is a powerful word processing system. It does almost as much as any other general-purpose package. It is especially strong in editing tools and, like its namesake, makes extensive use of control key commands for moving about the text and executing word processing functions. Good typists often find the Wordstar command system very effective once they learn it, and writers appreciate the smooth integration of whole documents.

The latest version of Wordstar 2000 Plus handles text columns and footnotes at the bottom of the page, as well as putting footnotes at the end of a document and producing multiline headers and footers. The list processing, index and table of contents, document assembly, and keyboard macro capabilities are extensive, and the spelling checker performs well. Wordstar 2000 has a powerful undo command, handles printer sheet feeders, implements a limited sort facility, can edit three files in three different windows, and handles math calculations. The package also has a telecommunications module for transmitting and receiving files from other computer systems.

Although relatively slow when compared to Word Perfect and even Officewriter, Wordstar 2000 would be an excellent product if used on a high-speed computer, such as an IBM PC AT or Compaq 286. In such an environment, its slowness ceases to be an impediment and its powerful features can fulfill their promise.

Samna Word III 3.0, from Samna Corp. of Atlanta, represents a system designed to protect and care for the user while providing elaborate word processing power. The package contains practically every feature available from its competitors, including text and numeric columns, an undo command, a substantial dictionary, foreign language support, complete footnoting, document assembly and list processing capabilities, index and table of contents generation, roman numerals,

sheet feeder support, keyboard macros, simple math, and a host of other useful functions.

Its editing facilities are excellent, including the capability to work with two screen windows and two documents at the same time, and it formats everything on the screen in virtually complete detail including the blank space represented by the left-hand margin. All this power is delivered through an elaborate system of menus and prompts that protect the user from mistakes so carefully that the program's speed and ease of use are seriously compromised.

To protect against document loss, the program constantly saves text, requiring constant access to the disk. On a floppy-based system, these constant calls to the disk slow down operations considerably. Even on a hard disk computer, the constant disk access and the elaborate prompting make this a powerful, easy-to-learn, but hard-to-use word processing program.

Special Capabilities

A number of word processing packages that are not targeted specifically at corporate users have nevertheless acquired a significant market in the business world because of some special feature or capability. Volkswriter 3, from Lifetree Software Inc. of Monterey, California, evolved from a simple, fast, and effective word processing package, has come of age, and now has most of the features and panache of high-end packages. Although it lacks features — such as windowing, text columns, and footnotes — its speed, powerful formatting capability, and great flexibility have endeared it to many office workers.

Famous for its easy-to-learn command system using the function keys and justly renowned for the total flexibility of its screen display and printing options, Volkswriter 3 is a fine choice for many offices, especially where hard disk personal

computers are unavailable. The program works fine on a dual floppy disk computer with very little degradation of speed or performance.

Microsoft Word 2.0, from Microsoft Corp. of Bellevue, Washington, occupies a unique niche in the word processing marketplace. It is an enormously powerful program, with formatting capabilities that exceed those of all but a professional typesetting system. Word shows practically every formatting feature or print enhancement on the screen and, with the right equipment, the results are spectacular. The program supports multiple windows for editing different documents at the same time or different parts of the same document.

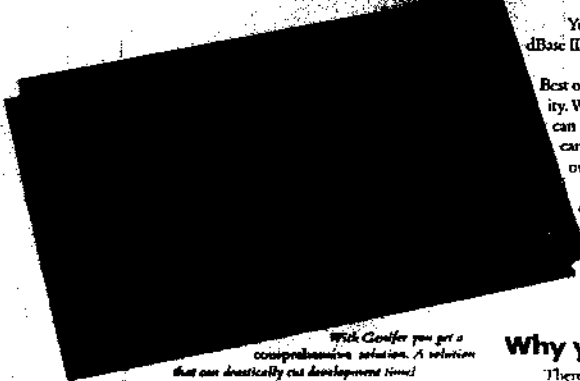
Two characteristics of the program appear to limit its acceptance in the office environment. It is difficult to learn how to use the multiple formatting capabilities of this program effectively. There are so many options implemented using printers'

terms unfamiliar that confusion easy to get lost program. Word comes at the many conditions type ahead of program makes illustrating the package.

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terms unfamiliar to most office workers that confusion becomes inevitable. It is easy to get lost in the complexity of this program. Word's great formatting power comes at the expense of speed. Under many conditions, a proficient typist can type ahead of the screen display. The program makes good use of a mouse, illustrating the graphics emphasis of this package.

With the proliferation of high-quality, inexpensive laser printers, Word may well gain an important audience with publication staffs producing in-house newsletters and other documents requiring complex layout characteristics. Microsoft Word running on an IBM PC AT with a high-resolution screen and a laser printer would be a fine desktop publishing system. Word, however, is probably not the word processor of choice for normal office work because it has features that many will not need and is relatively difficult.

Finally, we have the current release of

Micropro's veteran, Wordstar 3.31. Born in the days of expensive memory and widely diverse microcomputing environments, Wordstar delivers first-class word processing on computers of all sizes and capabilities. It works fine in an Apple II with a Z-80 card and 64K of memory. It works even better on an IBM PC with a hard disk, and it performs very well on an IBM PC AT. Wordstar, like all good survivors, adapts to whatever hardware is at hand.

Its technology and techniques are now outdated, and better and more powerful programs, such as those surveyed above, have overtaken this venerable leader. We include it here because, although other programs now outsell Wordstar 3.31 by a large margin, the installed base of Wordstar users is still truly impressive. If there is a lingua franca of the microcomputer word processing world, it is Wordstar. Many installations support Wordstar plus one other system, not out of a reverence for

tradition but from the recognition that Wordstar still does about 90 percent of what all the newer programs do.

Matching the Office Environment

What, then, is a micro manager to make of this complicated and confusing world? Our recommendation is to decide first on the word processing approach that best matches the way your office works. Page-oriented system such as Multimate and OfficeWriter work well in offices with hard disk machines and complicated documents. Their carefully constructed menu systems, elaborate document identification screens, and page-oriented approach fit an environment where most word processing is done by secretarial staff from copy prepared by others or delivered by dictation.

Offices where the word processing tasks are quite varied, where users have signifi-

cantly different skill levels, and where a considerable amount of document origination takes place on the computer may well be better suited to document-oriented systems, such as Word Perfect. Although equally powerful, these systems lend themselves better to the preparation of copy and often are more flexible in their approach to editing and managing text. Many users find that these systems adapt better to the extremes of the novice, occasional user and constant power user than the more rigidly structured page-oriented systems.

Another factor to keep in mind is that word processors differ in their philosophy about commands. Commands are the series of keys we type to tell the program to do something: delete a word, move a paragraph, or perform some other word processing function. Some systems use an IBM PC function key, such as F1, or a combination of function key and control key, such as Alt-F1, to perform a specific word processing action. Most of the high-powered word processing programs use this approach, derived from the elaborate keyboards of dedicated word processing machines. Programs developed for the IBM PC tend to be function-key-oriented.

The other approach uses control key combinations to invoke word processing actions. In this scheme, typing the control key plus one or two alphabet keys will delete, move, or insert material in the text. The advantage of this scheme is that the program can run on any computer with a standard keyboard without concern for the number of function keys available. All word processing functions can be performed without the typist having to remove his fingers from the typing keyboard to find dedicated function keys. Wordstar is the best example of this approach, and users who have become adept at such commands are often reluctant to give them up.

In every case, choosing a word processor needs to involve an extensive period of testing. Individuals representative of the user community should use the programs to prepare sample document types over a considerable period of time. A month's experience will give a good sense of a product's capabilities and limitations. Experienced word processing operators know that the package that works best during the first few weeks may not wear as well as one that is better designed but takes a bit more effort to learn.

Equally important, micro managers must evaluate the need for document and file interchange and assess the microcomputer power available for word processing. If documents must be moved from IBM systems to Wang systems, from departments with Wordstar to departments with OfficeWriter, the document conversion utilities of the word processing programs become a significant concern.

Likewise, if the office has microcomputers with 256K of memory and two floppy disk drives, some of the more complex and powerful programs will be poor choices. Although most of these packages will run on a dual-floppy system with 320K or less, most of the programs designed for the corporate environment need 512K of memory and a 10-megabyte hard disk. In environments where IBM PC XT's or AT's with hard disks are available, the more powerful programs become much more attractive.

Here's a final note of optimism: Experienced micro managers discover that users become devoted to whatever word processing software they learn how to use. We have often been bemused by the outraged reaction of users whose favorite word processor has been criticized. With some careful assessment, a micro manager can select an effective word processing package with little risk. The existence of so many excellent programs with such widespread support indicates that most of them can serve substantial user communities. □

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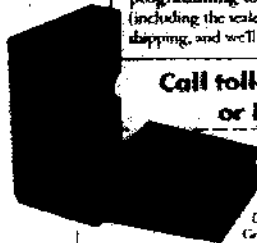
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