

EASY WORD PROCESSING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

BY JOHN LOMBARDI, REVIEW BOARD

Easy, fast, powerful. That's what everyone wants in a word processing program. Unfortunately, no single solution satisfies all users, so the marketplace for word processing programs for IBM PC-class machines has drifted into two vaguely defined segments. At one end of the spectrum are high-powered programs exemplified by Word Perfect Corp.'s Word Perfect 4.1, IBM Corp.'s Displaywrite 3, Samna Corp.'s Samna Word III, Microsoft Corp.'s Word 3.0, Micropro International Corp.'s Wordstar 2000, and Ashton-Tate's Multimate Advantage.

This class of software appears to have an infinite range of options and capabilities. Practically any text task can be performed, from newspaper columns to foreign language accents and symbols to complex formatting. These programs can index, outline, produce tables of contents, sort lists, prepare complex form letters, and manage elaborate document files. This rich complement of features and possibilities often carries with it a formidable learning task, however.

But many users have discovered that they only need a program to type a letter or a short paper, edit it, and print it neatly on a standard-size piece of paper. As a result, a market has emerged for simpler programs that satisfy the basic needs of professionals, office workers, students, and other people with relatively straightforward writing tasks. This market encompasses word processing programs designed to be easy to use rather than offer a wealth of features. The program that defined this market was Software Publishing Corp.'s PFS Write, now being replaced by PFS Professional Write.

A lower price also makes these easy-to-use programs particularly attractive to individuals or small companies buying computer systems for the first time, as well as to casual word processing users within large companies. Where the powerful packages carry list prices around \$500, the easy packages list closer to \$150 or less.

In this Special Report, we evaluate six of the simpler programs that illustrate this crowded segment of the market.

Leading off our survey is a new product, Easy Extra (Version 1.5 of Easy and Version 1.0 of EasyMail) from Micropro, long a major force in micro-computer word processing and the manufacturer of Wordstar. PFS Professional Write, Version 1.0 is likely to retain Software Publishing in its position as a major player in the easy-to-use word processing category. Simon & Schuster Inc.'s Webster's New World Writer, Version 1.01 — a new entry in the easy-to-use word processing sweepstakes — offers an excellent dictionary and thesaurus program. Lifetree Software Inc. produces two word processing entries evaluated here. One is Volkswriter 3, Version 1.0, an almost high-end package with excellent performance and many advanced features. The other is Volkswriter Deluxe Plus, Version 1.0, a subset of Volkswriter 3 at a lower price. We've included the two Volkswriters to show how one major software company has

tailored essentially the same product to meet two different market needs. Finally, we have Quicksoft's PC-Write, Version 2.6/7, a not-so-easy-to-use word processing system that is powerful yet very inexpensive. We include it to indicate that price does not always indicate performance or ease of use.

Assessing a feature's adequacy is a troublesome aspect of evaluating word

processing systems. One writer's frivolous feature is another's essential editing tool. And as the power and complexity of word processing programs has grown, the minimal set of features has expanded.

We tested these programs on an IBM PC with a 20-megabyte hard disk. While many people still use floppy disk drives, the 20-megabyte hard disk PC is rapidly becoming the standard machine. Some of the programs surveyed here work well with floppy disk drives, others do not perform well with those disk drives.

Speed is a controversial measurement of word processing performance because these programs differ greatly on what

they do quickly and what they do slowly. Some programs can reformat a page quickly. Some move quickly to a specific page, but they slowly scroll through text. Still others update the screen almost instantaneously.

We used three tests for speed. The first took a long file (about 50 single-spaced typed pages) formatted to 72-character lines and reformatted it to fit into 65-character margins. The second measured how long it took to move from the top of the file to the bottom. A third measured the time to find a word at the end of a file. Some word processing

Continued on Page 41



volkswriter rates rave reviews

“The new Volkswriter 3... is remarkably easy to learn and to use, and ranks with its more expensive brothers for speed, power and convenience. You might call it a cradle-to-grave word processor; very few users are likely to outgrow it.”
Henry Kisor, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

“Volkswriter 3 has taken a big leap forward into the upper reaches of word processing... I'm waiting for the big boys to catch up with this important challenger.
Volkswriter 3 has a very slick live math feature that tides up your numbers and does the cross-totaling (and a lot more calculating besides) for you.”
Peter Norton, DENVER POST

“Volkswriter 3 automatically hyphenates words that don't fit at the end of a line. Unlike many programs, however, it does it accurately.”
Lawrence J. Magid, LOS ANGELES TIMES

“Volkswriter 3 has become a powerful, full-featured word processing program that can rival any on the market as to its ease of learning and use.
At this point it appears that Volkswriter stands alone in offering so much for so little.”
DAN APRO

“Volkswriter 3 has one of the most graceful spelling checkers we have ever seen... the response ranges from fast to virtually instantaneous.
Fast, easy to use, powerful, and very flexible, Volkswriter 3 is an admirable improvement of an already successful word processing product.”
John Lombardi, INFO WORLD (77)

“Volkswriter 3 continues the tradition of Lifetree's earlier products: friendly, easy to use, yet sophisticated functionality. True to its name, Volkswriter 3 would make an excellent word processor for nearly all people.”
Scott Loffness, COMPUTING TODAY

Try it yourself. To order your \$5 demo diskette, call 1-800-543-3873. (In California 1-800-831-8733), or stop by your local computer store for a demonstration.

We think you'll agree with the reviewers that ...

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WORD PROCESSING PROGRAMS (MS-DOS)

Evaluation

Continued From Page 39

Editing Functions			Format Functions						Special Features										
Header/Footer	Header/Footer with Page No.	Header/Footer with Page No.	Underline	Boldface	Italic	Left Margin	Right Margin	Line Length/Number	Column Format	Multicolumn Text	Embedded Printing	Mail Merge	Quality	Spelling Checker	Table of Contents	Custom Lists	Automatic Linking	Byte Short	Monthly Features
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✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Embedded by page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	54	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	50	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Reduced to 128 bytes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Header only
Can go to line number
Optional
Checked

programs moved slowly to the bottom line the first time, and then subsequent moves were much faster. We always took the fastest time.

Easy Extra

Easy Extra cares for you, shelters you, coddles you, and helps you in every way imaginable. Almost everything about this program is easy, and it is this graceful caring that makes Easy Extra a solid competitor.

Easy Extra's features represent the essential core of a professional word processing package — but without many of the refinements and powerful enhancements of such programs. Easy Extra will handle correspondence, normal reports and documents, reasonably sophisticated mailing lists, and other document preparation tasks. Its limitations relate more to the complexity and depth of features available than to the size of the project.

Easy Extra has excellent file-handling capabilities, a simple menu-driven interface, and outstanding help screens. The menus can be bypassed by using a combination of function keys and letters to invoke the commands directly. Editing commands include all the basics for moving, deleting, copying, and inserting. The on-line documentation is very good. Typing the F1 key gives you context-sensitive help and access to a complete index of help screens. The help screens are informative, well-designed, and intelligent. You will rarely need to refer to the manual.

Easy Extra provides a simple ruler line at the top of the screen that clearly indicates page, line, and column numbers, and constantly reminds the user which three keys invoke the important menus: F1 for help, F2 for all menus, and Esc to get back to where you started.

The screen scrolls fairly quickly; typing is fast and efficient. And when you edit after activating the Auto Reform function, the paragraph automatically reformats on the screen. However, Easy Extra forces you to reformat every paragraph separately to change margins in the entire document, which can be a tedious process.

The program handles the standard editing and formatting tasks — underlines, boldfaces, margins, columns (numeric and text) — relatively fast, and the spelling checker works well.

The only real sluggishness in the program occurs when moving about the menus and when accessing the complex and fully developed help system. Although these delays are not significant on a hard disk, they do show up on a floppy disk system.

Easymail, the list processing system that forms part of Easy Extra, is a fixed format, mailing-list manager. Easymail has a standard form with many fields such as name, address, salutation, key-words, and notes that let you design relatively complex mailing-label systems. You cannot change any of the characteristics of the program's mailing-list form, however.

Easy Extra has the basic tools in an accessible and easy-to-learn package. The system would serve students and professionals who have standard correspondence and modest formatting requirements and would be a good choice if maintaining a mailing-list file is important to you. The relatively large program

will run best on a hard disk.

PFS Professional Write

Holding all of its text in memory, Software Publishing's PFS Professional Write is quick and agile.

The program offers an on-screen outline of a piece of paper. It doesn't show on-screen justification, but you can see underlining, boldfacing, and the

combination of the two. A Control key will boldface a word; the Block command will let you block a section, turn it all bold, reblock it, and turn it all underlined. You can't turn on bold and then type in bold text, however.

PFS Professional Write uses pull-down menus and some Control key commands for commonly used functions. The menus are easy to use and the

help screens are context sensitive.

The screen always displays a ruler line at the bottom of the screen, and a moving block cursor continuously shadows the main text cursor. In fact, PFS Professional Write has a busy word processing screen with lots of things going on. Many people like the activity, but others find it irritating. Only 19 lines can appear on the screen because the rest of the screen is

taken up by status lines and a two-line space between the end of the text and the ruler line. PFS Professional Write can only handle files of about 20 to 30 pages (or 60K), forcing you to break longer tasks into smaller pieces.

This is an easy-to-use system, cleanly designed and powerful. The address system for form letters is fairly comprehensive, while using a fixed form.

WORD PROCESSING PROGRAMS (MS-DOS)

Vendor	Product	Price	System Requirements					System Features															
			Minimum memory	Hard disk required	Number of printers supported	Warranty	Copy-protected	Maximum file size	Automatic file backup	On-line help	WYSIWYG	Supports a mouse	Mail merge	Page oriented	Document oriented	Batch printing							
Office Solutions Inc. 2802 Cole St. Madison, WI 53713 (608) 274-5047	Officewriter, Version 4.0	\$445	256K	—	105+	90 days, materials	—	95K	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Software Solutions 12777 Jamb Road Suite 100 Houston, TX 77070 (800) 548-3997 (800) 331-3119 in TX	The Word Processor, Version 3.0	\$395	192K*	—	3+	60 days, materials	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
GoldStar Int'l. 215 First St., #244 Seattle, WA 98109 (206) 282-0432	PC Write, Version 3.6	\$75*	256K	—	250+	90-day money-back guarantee	—	60K	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Samson Corp. 3750 N.E. Broadway Atlanta, GA 30345 (404) 251-3804	Samson Plus Version 3.1	\$495	312K	—	71+	30-day money-back guarantee	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Samson Word II, Version 3.0	\$530	320K	—	71+	90-day money-back guarantee	—	limited by memory	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shanon & Schuster Software One Gulf & Winton Plaza New York, NY 10023 (800) 624-0923 (800) 624-0934 in NJ	Webster's New World Writer	\$130	256K	—	36	30 days, materials	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Software Publishing Corp. 1901 Lakeside Drive San Mateo, CA 94043 (415) 963-8910	PFS Professional Write	\$199	320K	—	80+	90 days, materials	—	64K	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wang Laboratories Inc. 1 Industrial Ave. Lowell, MA 01851 (800) 225-9864	Wang Word Processing for the IBM PC, Version 3.0	\$695	256K	—	53	90 days, materials	—	500K	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Word Perfect Corp. 266 W. Center St. Orem, UT 84057 (801) 227-4000	Word Perfect, Version 4.1	\$495	256K	—	200+	90 days, materials	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Xyquest Int'l. P.O. Box 372 Bedford, MA 01730 (617) 273-4439	Xywrite III	\$395	256K	—	170	manufacturer's defects only	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Information contained in these charts was supplied by the vendors. InfoWorld has not independently verified the data.

*256K with option
Includes full documentation, updates, phone support, and newsletter. Manuals and limited documentation available for \$10.

WORD PROCESSING PROGRAMS (Macintosh)

Vendor	Product	Price	System Requirements					System Features															
			Minimum memory	Hard disk required	Number of printers supported	Warranty	Copy-protected	Maximum file size	Automatic file backup	On-line help	WYSIWYG	Supports a mouse	Mail merge	Page oriented	Document oriented	Batch printing							
Advanced Logic Systems Inc. 1283 Redwood Ave. Sunnyvale, CA 94089 (408) 747-1988	Word Handler, Version 1.6	\$79.95	512K	—	3+	90 days, manufacturer's defects only	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Apple Computer Inc. 20525 Mallard Ave. Cupertino, CA 95014 (408) 998-1010	Macwrite	\$125	128K	—	2	90 days, materials	—	200+ pages	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Microsoft Corp. 1601 N.E. 36th Way Suite 97017 Redmond, WA 98073 (206) 882-8080	Microsoft Word, Macintosh Version 1.05	\$195	128K	—	8+	90 days, materials	—	limited by disk	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Information contained in these charts was supplied by the vendors. InfoWorld has not independently verified the data.

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Unfortunately, it can only handle 256 entries. The dictionary is not as large as some but works well, although it bypasses an unrecognized word throughout the file, rather than allowing you to skip the word only once. Other minor disadvantages are the system's incapability to block text from the bottom toward the top of the file, as well as the rather clumsy way of boldfacing and underlining that

requires either a Control key with the cursor on the word or a block and change sequence. Also, the justification routine is not as sophisticated as some and did not work correctly on our Diablo 630 (although there are so many models of this printer that it is notoriously difficult to deal with). Other packages in this survey handled Diablo justification just fine.

In short, this is a medium-power package that fits exactly into the market niche defined as easy-to-use word processing programs. With a solid manual, clean user interface, good menus, and reasonable performance, we can recommend this program for people who need to produce normal correspondence, modest mailing-lists, short reports, or straightforward papers.

PFS Professional Write would not be the program of choice, however, for complex or long documents, or for sophisticated formatting. Like most of the programs in this group, PFS Professional Write works best on a computer with a hard disk. If you do run it from a floppy disk drive, you will have to switch disks to operate the dictionary, and you will encounter slower file management and dictionary performance.

WORD PROCESSING PROGRAMS (MS-DOS)

Editing Functions			Format Functions						Special Features												
Undo function	Shifts several files at one time	Widens per screen	Go to function	Horizontal scrolling	On-screen justification	Proportional spacing	Conditional breaks	Decimal tab function	Header/footer function	Lines per header/footer	Column function	Movable columns	Embedded printer codes	Mail merge	Glossary	Spelling checker	Table of contents function	Outline function	Automatic indexing	Style sheet	Running footnotes
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Unl.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	limited by page 250+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	limited by page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Unl.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	limited by page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*For Macintosh only
*Optional

Information contained in these charts was supplied by the vendors. InfoWorld has not independently verified the data.

WORD PROCESSING PROGRAMS (Macintosh)

Editing Functions			Format Functions						Special Features												
Undo function	Shifts several files at one time	Widens per screen	Go to function	Horizontal scrolling	On-screen justification	Proportional spacing	Conditional breaks	Decimal tab function	Header/footer function	Lines per header/footer	Column function	Movable columns	Embedded printer codes	Mail merge	Glossary	Spelling checker	Table of contents function	Outline function	Automatic indexing	Style sheet	Running footnotes
✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6 carriage returns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	unlimited	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*For Macintosh only
*Optional

Information contained in these charts was supplied by the vendors. InfoWorld has not independently verified the data.

Webster's New World Writer

Webster's New World Writer offers a powerful set of editing and formatting features with an excellent dictionary, a good thesaurus, and a clean user interface. The screen, with four status lines at the top and a clean ruler line at the bottom, provides an uncluttered space for composition. The status area shows page/line/column number; insert/type-over toggle, and the two keys that access menus and help.

Basic menus appear in the status areas, and choices can be selected by arrow keys or by typing the first letter of the selection. Additional information appears through pull-down menus and help windows that provide a comprehensive guide to features. The program comes with a handy reference card that has a clear diagram of the menu structure to help you gain access to the program's various features.

Webster's New World Writer has more editing and formatting features than the other programs evaluated here, but lacks the mail-merge and form-letter management facilities available in such products as Easy Extra and PFS Professional Write.

The dictionary of Webster's New World Writer, as would be expected from its name, contains more words than most microcomputer dictionary programs and even includes a special section of computer-related terms. But the dictionary runs as if it were separate from the main word processing system. First, the program saves the file, reads it, and compiles a list of words. The dictionary sorts the list, then scans it for unrecognized words. The dictionary then displays those words, along with some context information from the original text as well as a few alternatives. Users can choose to replace, edit, add to dictionary, and so on. The dictionary has excellent performance, and the thesaurus is good. The dictionary will not handle a document longer than about 20 single-spaced pages, however, a limitation that is not mentioned in the manual.

Webster's New World Writer can import and export ASCII files, facilitating document exchange, but it does not include DCA/RFT exchange, and thus there is no way to exchange formatted documents with other systems.

The program has an Undo feature that will restore the most recent deletion. It



also supports a variety of printers, but installing a printer is not entirely transparent. We selected our Diablo 630 from the menu and specified a serial printer. The program couldn't figure out how to send to "COM2" and hung when we requested a print. We had to reset to recover, losing the unsaved file that was on-screen. We recommend you try Webster's New World Writer with your equipment before purchasing.

The manual provided with the program includes a clear elementary discussion of computing and word processing, a quick summary of the program's features, an extensive section on how to prepare manuscripts of various kinds, and a large section on grammar, usage, and similar issues. The program also comes with an installation pamphlet that is too sketchy on the technical details,

which we could have used to understand why the printer wouldn't work. A separate command card provides a very good guide to the menu structure and command system.

While Webster's New World Writer will work with a composite green screen monitor attached to a Color Graphics Adapter, the instructions on how to make the screen legible are illogically displayed on-screen. The program's printed documentation told us how to get to the illegible screen, but it did not tell us what to do when we got there. We were able to decipher how to fix the screen only after inspecting the program code with a special editor — not an easy procedure.

In short, we recommend this word processing program to students, professionals, and writers who need a quick,

clean, and effective word processing system that has good editing tools and a relatively strong complement of formatting features. It is not as powerful as the Volkswriter programs and lacks the text merge/mailling-list management features of PFS Professional Write or Easy Extra, for example. Webster's New World Writer is easier to use than Volkswriter 3, however, and has equivalent, and in some respects actually superior, editing tools.

Volkswriter 3, Volkswriter Deluxe Plus

Lifetree Software's Volkswriter series of word processing programs has a long and distinguished history as one of the first programs of its kind for the IBM PC. The company's two main entries are Volkswriter 3, a full-feature word processing program, and Volkswriter Deluxe Plus, a reissue of the previous Volkswriter Deluxe 2.2 with a new spelling checker.

Both Volkswriter 3 and Volkswriter Deluxe Plus have essentially the same user interface. Both programs belong to the empty-screen school of word processing design (similar to Word Perfect and other professional systems). The editing screen starts out absolutely blank except for a status line or lines at the bottom of the screen that show the file name, line/column/page numbers, and other status information as needed. The program edits long documents very quickly, holding as much of the text as possible in memory. The result is a fast and effective word processor.

While both Volkswriter programs are easy to use, they do not have the complex and detailed help screens associated with the other products in this survey. Both have sparse help screens with short, even cryptic descriptions of the functions being performed. The need to continually consult the manual means that beginners will have a harder time learning the programs.

Unfortunately, the current version of the Volkswriter Deluxe Plus manual is a paperback book that does not lie flat (without destroying the binding) and is

difficult to consult. Volkswriter 3 still has a reasonable ring binder for a manual. The absence of detailed help screens will not be a problem for constant users, however.

Veteran Volkswriter Deluxe (2.2) users will be disappointed to see that the keyboard and printer customization feature that permitted foreign language and some scientific symbols is no longer included. The good news is that Deluxe Plus (Version 1.0) includes an excellent dictionary and speller, apparently the same as the one, Lifetree Software included in Volkswriter 3.

Volkswriter 3 does have such refinements as math sheets and complex style sheets, which are unavailable with any other programs in this class. Volkswriter 3 is clearly a cut above any of the competitors here, and it carries a higher list price as well.

Neither Volkswriter program has a file manager attached, although they will handle mail-merge tasks, form letters, and mailing labels using lists prepared with other programs. We do not recommend either Volkswriter program for small businesses with substantial mailing-list management tasks unless another data manager has been selected.

The choice between Volkswriter 3 and the Deluxe Plus will turn on price alone since Volkswriter 3 is clearly the better program with the larger repertoire of features.

PC-Write 2.6/7

Quicksoft's PC-Write is an anomaly. Although it has a comprehensive set of capabilities and editing tools, PC-Write is neither as slick nor as easy to use as its competitors. Born of the shareware concept, PC-Write is a one-author program originally distributed via computer bulletin boards with a manual on disk. The program met with such success that it is now sold and distributed by the author with a well-produced and detailed printed manual. (Although it is no longer available by bulletin board, the program can still be obtained through user groups.)

Under the shareware concept a user

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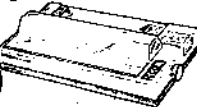
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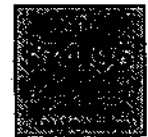
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This survey has convinced us that word processing is reaching the level where it requires a hard disk.

may make as many copies of the program disk as needed and distribute those disks to friends and neighbors. If the recipients like the program, they register with the company by paying \$75. The copy is registered to the original owner, who receives a \$25 rebate.

PC-Write is a low-cost, powerful word processing system. Its strengths are in its excellent editing capability, powerful formatting features, and considerable flexibility. PC-Write consists of two related programs: an editor and a formatter. The editor can handle documents of less than 60K, or about 20 to 30 single-spaced pages. Everything is in memory, so the editor is quick and effective. A host of screens and menu descriptions offers help on most of the program's features.

PC-Write makes liberal use of all the facilities of the PC's keyboard and has special commands in the text that control the exotic features of the print-time

formatting. Practically anything you want to do with text can be accomplished with PC-Write, although not always easily. PC-Write has no dictionary. An add-on dictionary program such as The Word Plus or Turbo Lighting will work just fine with the standard files produced by PC-Write but, of course, will add to the price of the product.

And while PC-Write can do form letters very well and produce mailing lists, it does not have a built-in data file management system. The manual describes how such a system can be implemented through the use of the editor and the PC-DOS Sort command, but this solution is not a satisfactory substitute for the well-designed file managers in Easy or PFS Professional Write, for example.

PC-Write handles a wide range of printers and offers a remarkable complement of special printing capabilities either through customization or the built-in printer tables. But it is not an easy program to work with. This is a do-it-yourself system that requires a great deal of knowledge about printers and their characteristics. As a result, PC-Write is not for inexperienced or casual computer users without access to technical expertise.

This program is a good buy for people who like their programs lean and who would like to tailor their word processor to their specific way of working. While limited to documents of 20 to 30 pages (60K) and having no dictionary or data file manager, PC-Write offers a useful alternative for people who like to customize their word processing.

Not for the faint of heart, PC-Write is a good program, with many advanced editing and formatting features, at a reasonable price.

Conclusion

This survey has convinced us that microcomputer word processing is rapidly reaching the level where it requires a hard disk. Only PC-Write is truly a floppy disk-based word processing program. The others can run on floppy-based machines, but you will have to change disks frequently to use the dictionary and thesaurus.

In today's business environment, most users will have a hard disk drive. With this in mind, we based our evaluation results on the assumption that you have such a configuration. Of the programs surveyed in this Special Report, PFS Professional Write (\$199) and Easy Extra (\$149) are the ease-of-use champions. PFS Professional Write is not as powerful as Easy Extra, however, both in terms of the size of the document (Professional Write can handle only about 60K, or 30 pages) and in the number of records possible in the mailing-list system (only 256 records). Also, PFS Professional Write does have a faster and more powerful set of editing facilities.

Webster's New World Writer (\$150) is a close competitor to these two leaders, although its menu system is not as easy to use. But with its many features, complex and sophisticated dictionary and thesaurus, and orientation toward academic writing, the program is an excellent

choice for students or others engaged in expository or creative writing.

The Volkswriters (3 and Deluxe Plus) offer fast, effective editing. We think Volkswriter Deluxe Plus (\$99) is a good word processor, particularly for people who want fast editing performance when dealing with large files. Volkswriter 3 (\$295) is a much better program, however, with significantly greater power that does not cut into its ease of use. While more expensive than Volkswriter Deluxe Plus, we think users who like the style of Volkswriter Deluxe Plus would be better off investing the extra \$196 for Volkswriter 3. Volkswriter 3 has the features, complexity, and price that place it almost outside the realm of this survey of relatively inexpensive, easy-to-use programs.

PC-Write 2.6/7 (\$75 for a registered copy) offers a do-it-yourself kit for powerful word and text processing tasks. A superior editor and powerful print formatting program combine to deliver excellent performance at a low price. The amount of technical knowledge required to get the most from PC-Write is substantial, and novices would not enjoy using this program. We think PC-Write has a place with people who have special editing needs, and with those who like to mold the program to fit their own personal style, for PC-Write is almost infinitely malleable.

As a recap, then, we recommend PFS Professional Write and Easy Extra for ease of use. Volkswriter Deluxe Plus leads the group in terms of value, with Easy Extra and PFS Professional Write tied for second.

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