IBM Word Processing Program Polished Up But Still Not Good

By John Lombard

IBM's DisplayWrite 4 offered some valuable new features and a much improved user interface, but performance remains much the same. This is still one of the top three word processors on the market.

FEATURES:

Here's what IBM has added. The program lets you mark revisions while editing. Cursor control keys now let you move forward or backward a word at a time. The program now supports a variety of popular mouse devices. If you need to quit the program and then return to it, a "Quick Fix" feature will automatically return the cursor to its last location. You can also use the program's "paste" command to move your current block selection to another document. Much-needed improvements have also been made to the spell checker, it's data save routines, and fine processing.

In addition, for $1,290, you can buy a voice communications kit, which can make your system talk!
Software Reviews

March 9, 1987

Satisfactory rating in performance.

Documentation:
The manuals have been completely rewritten and condensed from two boxed leaf binders to one. A "Getting Started" section does a good job of giving an overview and walks you through setting up the program and creating, editing, and printing a file. The main manual contains almost entirely of an alphabetical listing of the program's major features. A third booklet is a useful technical reference manual for system people and includes information on such topics as printer definitions, hardware considerations, and supported options. A helpful keyboard summary card completes the documentation. Context-sensitive online help is available. Unfortunately, the indexes for the three manuals are fair at best, and the manuals have no glossary. There is a list of changes from the previous version, a summary former Displaywrite 3 users would very much welcome.

The documentation has improved much the same information is provided in a more accessible form. It's still not as comprehensive as it could be — examples are kept to a minimum, making it harder to learn, especially for advanced topics. Sites with in-house training or special support arrangements with IBM will be able to make better use of Displaywrite 4 than individuals can. But the documentation is well-organized and easier to use than Displaywrite 3. We rate documentation satisfactory.

Ease of Learning:
Because of the improved manuals and help system, this version of Displaywrite is much easier to learn than its predecessor. The on-line, context-sensitive help is much easier to use than before. Now you can scroll through an alphabetized list of topics and quickly choose one from the menu, rather than having to execute a series of commands and enter topic numbers.

There is no on-disk tutorial, and the few examples in the documentation make it difficult for inexperienced users to learn how to manage some of the more complicated features.

However, because of its better documentation, on-line help, and user interface, we think Displaywrite 4 is enough of an improvement over Displaywrite 3 to earn a satisfactory rating for ease of learning.

Ease of Use:
The redesigned user interface is the most important difference between Displaywrite 4 and its predecessor. Where Displaywrite 3 was entirely menus-driven — with full-page menus for every major function and one-line menus at the bottom of the screen for function-key selections — the new version uses pull-down menus and is not as closely tied to the function keys. (You use a mouse, for example.) Improved are the menus, which are better organized and more detailed, the help screens, which are easier to use; and the cursor controls, which are more extensive.

Displaywrite 4, a direct descendant of IBM's dedicated word processor, is a page-oriented system. Page breaks are major elements in the structure of a document, and the program insists on providing a new screen whenever your file crosses a page boundary. Fortunately, the program now automatically inserts a page break when you cross line 60. Unfortunately, this happens only when you insert, edit, or add text to the end of the document; it does not work when you insert or delete text later. In those situations, you have to invoke pagination to renumber the page breaks.

On the other hand, pagination is now part of the save-document routine. By executing one menu choice, you can now save and paginate in one step, a vast improvement over Displaywrite 3.
improvement over the cumbersome pagination procedure that had its own main menu entry as a separate task in Displaywrite 3.

There is also now a Save and Return function, a significant omission in Displaywrite 3. In addition, the program now has a Word Processing option, which does not appear on the main menu, so you can quit a document without saving changes. There is also a new feature that lets you look at files without running intentionally altering them.

Displaywrite 4 still hasn't jumped to the top of the pile in ease of use. It won't, for example, do windowing, and you can't minimize, maximize, or restore the cursor keys. Displaywrite 4 is more flexible than its predecessor, but it's still intended as an office word processor, where you don't have much help from formatted text and editing as a separate task. We rate Displaywrite 4 satisfactorily in ease of use.

ERROR HANDLING:
Displaywrite 4 didn't automatically create backup files, so you were always working with your original. Furthermore, you can't jump to page 2 of Displaywrite 3 so easily as to allow you to go back to page 1. Displaywrite 4 is more flexible, but the Save and Continue function on the Save menu. Although it doesn't do anything automatically create backups, you can now easily create a backup yourself.

We strongly recommended that you do so, and frequently, because Displaywrite 4 still suffers from the shortcomings of losing data if the current file is not closed properly. If there is a power failure or other problem, you will lose some or all of the current file, not just the current edit, but the file on disk. There is a recovery utility, but it's spotty.

The program does not handle open drive doors well. When you attempted to save a file with the drive door open, we lost the entire file every time. We surely get this kind of error handling failure these days.

Displaywrite 4 is better than Displaywrite 3, which received a score of unacceptable in this category. The Save and Continue, Abandon File, and View File features are welcome additions that make it easier to maintain data integrity. However, Displaywrite 4 still lacks automatic backup, easily loses files, and is unable to handle elementary DOS error situations. As a result, we rate error handling as poor.

SUPPORT:
Displaywrite 4 is not copy-protected. IBM provides no telephone support for retail buyers. You must rely on your dealer if you buy this program from them. If you have trouble, IBM asks you to fill out a lengthy form and mail it to a post office box. You do not agree to return or does not agree to fix any problems. In addition, this mailing service is available only for the first 30 days you own the program.

Most copies of Displaywrite 4 are sold directly to corporate volume buyers, who will have their own support arrangements with IBM or in-house support that makes their retail support policies irrelevant.

However, we can't rate unspecified corporate support policies. Since the product is offered retail, we will rate it based on IBM's stated support policies for the retail buyer. Our conclusion: The retail buyer will find IBM's support insufficient, especially since competing programs such as WordPerfect offer superior support. Unless you have access to an experienced technical support staff or to an unusual dealer, we think you'll find support to be poor.

VALUE:
Displaywrite 4 is improved over its predecessor. It offers a better user interface, improved handling of pagination, powerful document assembly and flat processing capabilities, and additional features over Displaywrite 3. Displaywrite 4 will do most word processing jobs reasonably well and with reasonable ease and speed.

However, at $495, this product is much less of a value than Office Writer 3 or Word Perfect 4.2. For a similar amount of cash, you can get more features, better performance, and much better support.

Displaywrite 4's one real value is to the corporate site where IBM compatibility across all systems is a vital requirement. Displaywrite 4 is file and command compatible with related versions of the same product that run on different-sized systems, minicomputers, and mainframes. It can transfer files to and from related IBM text processing systems.

Although the individual retail buyer or small business will have no particular reason to buy this product when better ones are available for the same price, IBM shops will gain enough extra benefit from its compatibility to rate Displaywrite 4 a satisfactory value.

John Lampert is a professor of history and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967.

Inline Handy Outliner Converts Files Into Word Processor Formats

By Charles Spaziano Review Board

While some outlining programs offer extensive text-editing capabilities, many users prefer to import a flattened outline into their favorite word processor for polishing. Inline, a new outliner for the PC, offers the special benefit of converting its outlines into the file format of any of several popular word processors.

You can then edit, enhance, and expand your outline as it was developed with Word Perfect, Microsoft Word, Multimate, Wordstar, or Wordstar 2000.

FEATURES:
Inline is an application outliner like ThinkTank (see review, August 28, 1985), not memory-resident like PC Outline (May 12, 1984), Ready (October 21, 1985), or Streamline (February 9, 1987). Inline includes word wrap so your headings and subheadings can be in the form of paragraphs of text.

Inline letters and numbers its headings and subheadings and subheadings and subsubheadings according to standard outline format. When you collapse an outline, Inline also inserts a plus sign to mark headings that have subordinates.

Inline has a Text function and a clipboard to allow convenient merging of outlines and outline sections. Macros can be created and assigned to the 10 function keys. Inline also has a convenient internal file directory. A limited number of text editing functions are provided, as are Search and Replace.

PERFORMANCE:
Inline is a fairly basic outliner in its capabilities. A given heading or subheading can hold 500 characters (about half a screen) of word-wrapped text. This con-

Productivity
WordPerfect Now Easy To Learn

How Hands On Learning Holds Interest, Saves Time And Money

Novices Become Experts

"It's amazing," says one manager at an east coast pharmaceutical company, "employing the learning disk gets so involved they stay after hours. You just can't walk away from it." One lawyer in Boston liked it so much he bought a copy for his wife.

Growing popularity of high power software like WordPerfect has customers clamoring for help learning how to use all the features. The Hands On Learning Disk is like a private tutor for WordPerfect users: it provides complete and in-depth training.

Because it works with the real WordPerfect program (not a simulation) users learn faster and better than from other tutorials, books, or even live courses. And since it's money, the Learning Disk pays for itself many times over.

Don't take our word for it - try it for 30 days on your PC/XT/AT or compatible hardware. Once you have used the Hands On Learning Disk, you won't want to be without it. If you don't agree send it back for a full refund.

(A Please call us if you have questions)

(917 344-4022) for WordPerfect Version 5.1
For WordPerfect Version 6.0 for 30 days or more, 1-800-388-3900
(Michigan residents and 917-835-1700 or 917-835-1701)

(917 344-4022) for WordPerfect Version 5.1
For WordPerfect Version 6.0 for 30 days or more, 1-800-388-3900
(Michigan residents and 917-835-1700 or 917-835-1701)

(917 344-4022) for WordPerfect Version 5.1
For WordPerfect Version 6.0 for 30 days or more, 1-800-388-3900
(Michigan residents and 917-835-1700 or 917-835-1701)

(917 344-4022) for WordPerfect Version 5.1
For WordPerfect Version 6.0 for 30 days or more, 1-800-388-3900
(Michigan residents and 917-835-1700 or 917-835-1701)