Samna Word IV
Word Processor Has Powerful Document Handling Features

By John Lombardi, Review Board

In the rough-and-tumble office world of word processing, the leading programs — including Word Perfect, Multimate, Works, and StarWriter — are constantly being improved so that none falls behind the others. Not to be left behind is Samna Word IV. Thanks to added and improved features, it remains among the top contenders.

FEATURES:
Samna is basically a page-oriented word processing system, which means that the program pays more attention to pages than to individual lines of text. However, the distinction between page- and document-oriented systems has decreased substantially, with most page-oriented word processors adopting many features of the document systems. The key distinction for Samna involves creating and determining page breaks.

In addition to a full set of editing commands and the usual set of capabilities to boldface, underline, center, and justifY text, Samna has a number of powerful document management features. The program will handle paragraphs of standard phrases, paragraphs, or pages. You can insert this body-text test into mostly repetitive documents, such as those found in insurance companies and law firms. Samna also has full memory capabilities, including selection criteria, for form letters and mailing labels. And Samna has a special feature for working with preprinted forms.

Samna can sort and do math. You can also program special keys to duplicate a sequence of keystrokes or repeat a word or phrase. It will move, cut, paste, do columns, and print on a wide range of printer types. Samna does handle headers and footers as well as footnotes, outlining, and line numbering.

The features list for programs as complex as these goes on and on; we’ve included just the most important ones.

Samna does have a zoom feature that shows the relationship of the text, footers, headers, and footnotes on a page. You can’t read the text while using the zoom feature, but it does show exactly how the page will look when printed. Now, though, that zoom window works only with graphics display cards.

Samna has two types of columns — independent (or non-stacking) and newspaper-style stacking. With the independent columns, text doesn’t flow from one column to another, but you can see more than one column on-screen at once. With the newspaper style columns, text flows from column to column, but if you want to see more than one column on-screen, you must use the zoom.

With the independent columns, you can mix pages with columns. Unfortunately, you don’t have this option with newspaper columns. A significant drawback. Competing programs such as Word Perfect and Microsoft Word let you mix newspaper columns with other areas of regular text in a file.

Further, Samna prints newspaper columns by first printing column one and then reversing the paper for the top of the form and printing the second column. This works with pin-fed printers and printers that print on a reverse line feed, but it is much less effective with single-sheet paper and is impossible with printers that do not reverse line feed.

Samna IV has a flexible and comprehensive forms management feature that uses the word processor to store and print data on preprinted forms. Samna supplies a transparent plastic grid to permit an accurate description of your preprinted form; you then enter the

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coordinates for the form's different fields into a series of screens.

We briefly mentioned Sam- no's grammar function, which lets you store and retrieve oft- used text. Classifiers are essential for business purposes, where much text is common to all responses. There is also a four-function calculator that can do math in an on-screen register or operate on columns and rows. This feature works well and is more effective than the similar function in Word Perfect. It integrates present calculations into the capability to maintain two memory registers in addition to the total register.

The Summ IV speller is good, with a dictionary of some 60,000 words and the capability to do automatic dictionary hyphenation. The speller works quickly and easily, offering suggestions for underlined words that you have accepted as to the dictionary, replace it with a suggested spelling, edit it, or skip it. Although the speller has a word-count feature, you cannot get a word count without spell-checking the entire document.

In this survey of performance, we have spent much time investigating Samma's limitations — including the slow reformating and the awkward handling of newspaper columns — but strengths. However, this program is a strong performer in most areas, including its forms management, graphics, and math features. We rate its performance very good, placing it in about the same league as Multimate and somewhat below Word Perfect.

DOCUMENTATION: Samson IV's documentation consists of a useful introductory brochure, an on-line manual, a loose-leaf three-ring binder, and disk-based documentation about printers. The on-line manual provides a useful introduction to Samma's capabilities. In the reference manual, each entry has a description, a step-by-step set of instructions, and comments outlining limitations and alternates. The disk-based printer information is also comprehensive, although we prefer printed documentation, especially given the complexity of the subject. We also prefer more examples in the documentation.

The on-line help consists of two levels if you have a floppy-based system and three levels for those with hard drive systems.

The first level is a menu of choices; the second has a two-line description of what the feature does. The third level gives more detailed information. Still, the on-line help is not as thorough as that in Word Perfect. Multimate or Microsoft Word and you will likely find yourself frequently referring to the manual.

With a very good manual but only fair on-line support, we rate Samma's documentation good.

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With all this praise and all these incredible features, you'd expect MemoryMate to cost a lot more than $69.
EASE OF LEARNING:
No complex product of this kind is completely easy to learn. And Samma IV takes somewhat more learning than most. It makes extensive use of named keys. For example, Samma takes your F1 key, calls it save and displays information exclusively by that name. Although this makes using different keyboards easier, it also complicates matters.

The cursor keys on the keypad have substantially different meanings from those normally associated with the standard keypad. Once you learn these designations, they cause no particular problem, but they take some learning, even with the provision of keyboard templates.

The complex functions, such as forms, mail-merge, and sort, require careful reading of the manual to use well. Given the abundance of full-on-line help, new users will be forced to spend a lot of time consulting the index and the manual. However, the disk-based tutorial provides a useful introduction to Samma's capabilities and the programs at its class. Samma IV earns a satisfactory rating in ease of learning.

EASE OF USE:
Once you've learned Samma, however, it is easy to use. Not completely predictable and dedicated keys and special designations for functions make access to various activities relatively easy. Samma's programs remain. The system will not store keystrokes and the need to re-enter on-screen or at print time.

ERROR HANDLING:
Samma IV has a comprehensive system for protecting the user from errors. The program operates directly on the text stored on disk and on the screen. Samma IV is designed to handle errors and prevent the user from reaching the error state.

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SUPPORT:
Samma IV is not copy-protected. Samma offers 30 days of free support. We called the support line (one toll-free), and the technician provided us with superb help. Although he didn't have all the answers, he found them and called back within 10 minutes. For $125, you can buy an extended support plan, which enables you to call the help desk. This program is available at a price per year, as well as at a price for multiple-hour use.

The disk-based printer support is useful, but the main program is not resident in memory. It can be used in combination with a few useful features, Samma IV nevertheless has many advantages that put it above other similar software packages.

VALUE:
Priced at $595, Samma IV costs the same as Multimate Advantage II. However, it is more expensive than other leading competitors, including Microsoft Word 3 (354.90) and a few of its alternatives (e.g., $495). Within its class of high-powered office word-processing programs, Samma IV has a competitive cost/feature ratio, performance, and services that put it just below the top of the class — Word Perfect. Slightly harder to learn than some of the competition, not on the same level as a program worth more than $400.

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