

Product Comparison

EXECUTIVE
WORD
PROCESSORS

BY JOHN LOMBARDI, REVIEW BOARD



all them the Hyundais of the word processing market — those DOS word processing programs that eschew the luxury options and power of the high-priced touring sedans in favor of the simplicity and low prices common in coupes and sedans.

These programs are designed for those with modest needs in word processing software. Their aim: to provide a subset of full word processing functions at a substantially lower cost and demanding a significantly lower learning effort for the user. In theory, users of these programs either don't need all the features, and therefore shouldn't have to pay for them, or only occasionally need word processing and thus want a program that

doesn't pose much of a learning curve.

Like touring sedans, powerful word processing programs such as Word Perfect and Microsoft Word have their place, especially for those offices with large mailing lists, complex document preparation, and high-volume production. But for the many users with simpler needs, using those high-end programs is like taking a Lamborghini to pick up a pint of milk at the corner grocery store.

In this product comparison, we examine eight leading easy-to-use word processing programs — Dac Easy Word II, Easy Extra, Einstein Writer, PFS: Professional Write, Q&A Write, Textra, Volkswriter 3, and Webster's New World Writer.

Although their list prices vary from as low as \$29 for Textra to \$295 for Volkswriter 3, these programs are alike in many ways: All are easy to use, offering menus, on-line help, and other features to help you navigate around the program. The sophistication of the on-line help systems ranges from the spartan lists of Volkswriter 3 to the elaborate on-line explanations in PFS: Professional Write or Q&A Write. With the exception of Volkswriter 3, you generally can use these programs without referring to the manual.

Without exception, the programs do a fine job of basic editing and printing. The cursor commands do just about the same thing, although in slightly different ways. All can cut and copy blocks of text, enhance the text with boldface and underline, center lines, justify text, set tabs, and arrange margins. They find and replace text, check spelling (with varying degrees of sophistication), and insert text from files stored on disk.

We will take it as given that each product in this report can do these basic word processing functions, and we will concentrate here on the features and performance that differentiate the products.

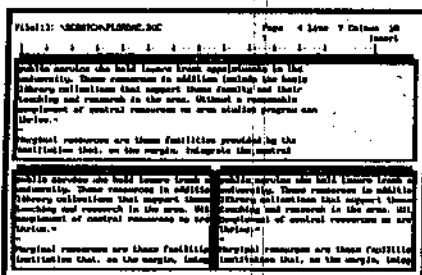
Three products can only handle files of about 60 to 65K. This translates into about 30 pages of single-spaced text. For many applications — correspondence, for example — such a limit is of no consequence. But for long reports, this limitation can be a significant irritant.

All systems require lots of disk space, ranging from a high of 1.3 megabytes for Micropro's Easy Extra to a low of 772K for Einstein Writer. Although all claim they can work fine on floppy disk drives, using these programs on such a system will require you to swap disks. We recommend you run these programs on a hard disk system (which we used for all our tests). What follow are sections on each of the eight programs pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of each.

DAC EASY WORD II

Dac Easy Word II is quite fast (see the accompanying benchmark chart) and can handle very large files (about 500 pages), since the program keeps only a small portion of the document in memory at any one time.

Dac Word II has a nice windowing feature. It lets you have four windows open simultaneously. Although you cannot have two windows open into the same document,



Dac Easy Word II offers a windowing feature that lets you open up to four windows simultaneously.

you can have windows open into different documents or into copies of the same document. You can show all four windows on-screen or enlarge one so that it takes up the whole screen.

Also included in Dac Word II is a handy mailing list manager. Although not the most powerful on the market, it is more than adequate for most mailing list applications. It will sort on any combination of fields, support multiple indexes, and print labels, lists, or form letters.

Although Dac Word II does not support microspace justification — thereby leaving rivers of white space throughout the text — it does permit microspace justification if it is done by the printer and not the word processor.

A command will let you temporarily exit to DOS to run another program and then return you to the same spot in your Dac Word II document with all your work intact. Dac Word II also supports up to 26 different macros per document subdirectory.

A separate utility program converts mailing list files from ASCII delimited format and from original Dac Word format to Dac Word II format. When importing text files, you can import Dac Word I and pure ASCII files. You can also import "paragraph delimited" ASCII files, which give you carriage returns after each paragraph, not each line, but the DCA file format is not supported.

The spelling checker is barely adequate. Although reasonably quick, it flagged many common words — including *studies, campus, education, and department* — as misspelled. In contrast, PFS: Professional Write's spelling checker recognized all these words.

Dac Word II has an Undo/Redo feature that lets you restore your most recent block deletion. However, you can't restore word or line deletions that you made without the block command.

During our tests, we encountered a few performance problems. We found that Dac's ASCII import feature is not all that robust. When we tried to import some ASCII files, the system hung. Dac Word II will also hang with extremely large files, say between 500 and 1,000 pages.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Dac Easy Word II

List price, \$49. Version tested (II) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives; hard disk recommended. Dac Software Inc., 4801 Spring Valley Road, Building 110B, Dallas, TX 75244; (800) 992-7779, (214) 458-0038.

Pros: Fast editor; large file size; multiple windows; mailing list manager; low price. **Cons:** Weak speller; limited file importing. Recommended for those wanting multiple windows.

Although this file size is unlikely, it's still unfortunate to encounter the problem.

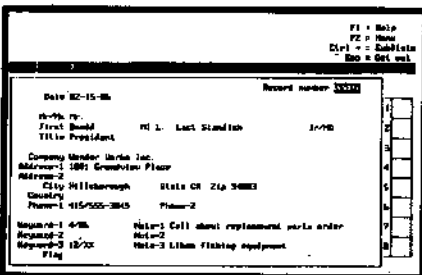
Dac Easy Word II has its strengths — its speed, large file size, use of windows, and mailing list manager. But its file import capability is limited, and its performance is not rock-solid. This program is for those to whom the multiple windows and low \$49 price are important.

EASY EXTRA

Easy Extra is indeed easy; in fact, no other program in this group is more straightforward to use.

The program is also quite capable. Basically, it's Wordstar 3.31 with some added features and an easier user interface. Everything is menu-driven — there are no control-key commands as in Wordstar. But Easy Extra does read Wordstar files directly and will interpret most of the dot commands available in Wordstar 3.3. Not all of the dot commands work, though, and the manual is unclear on the subject.

For example, while the Wordstar line height command works in Easy Extra, the corresponding command for character width doesn't. The command for microjustification is not implemented in Easy, but the special characters for left/right page numbers work. The specialized command that changes the amount



Micropro's Easy Extra offers a fixed-field file manager for mailing list management chores.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Easy Extra

List price, \$99. Version tested (1.50) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives. Micropro, P.O. Box 7079, San Rafael, CA 94901; (800) 227-5609, (415) 499-7788.

Pros: Very easy to learn and use; good card file system and substantial printer support; unlimited document size. **Cons:** No global reformat command; inflexible mail-merge system. Recommended for occasional users who do not want to cope with complex systems with many variables and who require occasional long documents. Also suited for normal mailing list management chores.

above or below the line that super- and subscripting is printed does not work in Easy, but the commands that set page layout do work. The manual is incomplete on these points.

The program can import 1-2-3 worksheets directly into the text, an advantage for the preparation of reports, and it handles files of almost any length (limited only by disk space). Its speed is adequate for most purposes, although it is quite slow at search and replace. There is no math or sorting.

Easy does have a fine fixed-field file manager for mailing lists. Called Easy Mail, this add-on to the Easy program (thus the *Extra* in the name) offers a comprehensive mailing list system with many features. Although the fields are preset and can't be changed, there is sufficient space for most mailing list needs. Unfortunately, the system sorts only one field at a time and is case sensitive. Nonetheless, the file manager is useful and effective.

One significant drawback is that you cannot reformat an entire document to match new margins. Instead, you must go through it paragraph by paragraph, explicitly reformatting each one. (There is no repeat command, as in Wordstar.)

Easy Extra supports a large number of printers, and it does handle microspaced justification, although we could find no discussion of this in the manual. The speller is quite good, but there is no hyphenation. Neither is there footnoting, macro support, or DCA file format support.

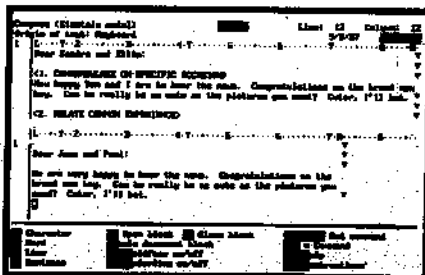
In short, we recommend this \$99 program for casual users since its user interface is very simple and easy to use. It's also a good choice for those working with long documents or who have many mailing list management chores but don't need more sophisticated word processing. One advantage for offices where Wordstar is common is Easy Extra's capability to read Wordstar documents and to recognize some Wordstar dot commands.

EINSTEIN WRITER

Einstein handles normal editing functions solidly, and it contains a strong set of commands for all the standard word processing features.

One unique feature is Einstein's Compose mode. In this mode, the program splits the screen and brings in a template document that can serve as a model for writing a similar document in the lower window. A short set of sample models is included with the program.

Printer support is good. Einstein supports a list of generally available printers and automatically supports bolding, underlining, and similar enhancements. However, you must enter any extra features in a special



Einstein Writer's Compose mode has a template that can serve as a model for what you write in the bottom window.

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSOR BENCHMARKS

	Dac Easy Word Ver. II	Easy Extra Ver. 1.50	Einstein Writer Ver. 7.6	PFS: Professional Write Ver. 1.0	MSA Write Ver. 1.0	Textus Ver. 4.0	Yellowwriter 3 Ver. 1.0	Walter's New World Writer Ver. 1.05
Load File	:02	:01	:01	:01	:01	:01	:06	:03
Save/Continue	:08	:07	:01	:01	:01	:04	:08	:09*
Save/Exit	N/A†	Varies	:01	N/A†	Varies	:03	N/A†	:09*
ASCII Import	:24	:01‡	:01‡	:07	:08	:01	:05‡	:03‡
ASCII Export	:11	N/A†	:06	:05	:04	:03	:06	:08
DCA Translate	N/A†	N/A†	N/A†	:45	N/A†	N/A†	:24	N/A†
Cursor Jump/Buttons	:01	:06	:04	Immed.	Immed.	Immed.	Immed.	:02*
Manual Scroll	1:35	1:34	1:34	1:29	1:34	1:44	1:34	1:34
Storage Performance	:11	N/A†	Immed.	:13	:05	:03	:06	:19
Storage 20 Pages	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.	Auto.
Search	:03	:08†	:08	:11	:01	Immed.	Immed.	:13
Search/Replace	:08	5:04	4:35	2:09	:29	2:26	3:65	4:53
Print/Print Preview	:07	:14	N/A†	N/A†	:12	N/A†	:05	:12
File Size	58K	56K	55K	55K	66K	58K	57K	56K
Maximum File Printed	38	18	18	34	19	19	38	18

System Configuration: IBM AT with 640K, 1MB Expanded Memory.
 † Feature not available.
 ‡ Program reads in ASCII with carriage returns after each line.
 * Can only reformat documents one paragraph at a time.

* First of four line tests approximately twice as long as remaining three tests.
 † Document or copy buffer size limitation prevents executing this test.
 ‡ Saving and exiting a document are separate procedures.
 * Save is a general command after which you may exit or return to edit.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Einstein Writer

List price, \$75. Version tested (7.6) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 128K RAM, two floppy disk drives, DOS 2.0 or later; hard disk recommended. Perceptronics, 6271 Varied Ave., Woodland Hills, CA 91367; (818) 884-7470.

Pros: Effective editing; and formatting of standard text; excellent separate spelling checker usable in batch mode; Compose mode for split-screen templates or examples of standard correspondence. **Cons:** Less easy to learn and use; limited file size of 60K; complex command sequences; slow spelling program; no mail-merge or form letter capability. Recommended for those for whom the Compose feature is of some interest.

printer command file and then invoke them with a Ctrl-P code sequence.

Like PFS: Professional Write, Einstein has a file limit size of 60K, or about 30 pages. But Einstein is not as easy to learn or to use, largely because its menus and commands are cluttered on-screen and are difficult to decipher.

Einstein does not currently have a mail-merge or form letter function that would permit mailing list applications. (A spokeswoman said the firm is developing a stand-alone mail-merge program that is intended to link easily with Einstein Writer, but no shipping date has been announced.) Although the manual mentions a mini-thesaurus, that feature has been removed from the program, according to the vendor.

Einstein's dictionary is a separate program that works well but slowly. The dictionary can check spelling in batch mode, which lets you check multiple files and then review and correct them later. One advantage of the separate spelling checker is that you can easily run Einstein on a floppy disk system. However, the integrated spelling checker of PFS: Professional Write and Volkswriter 3 is both faster and easier to use.

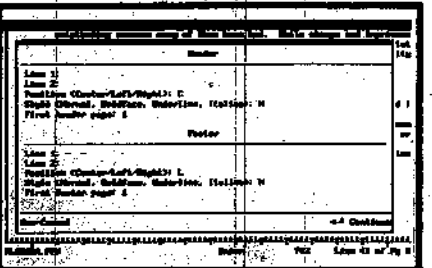
Einstein has some useful features not available in PFS. For example, it can change from uppercase to lowercase and vice versa within a block. It also has a better search and replace function.

However, Einstein is quite limited at converting files. It can translate straight ASCII files only — no Wordstar or DCA/RFT files. (We learned that the vendor is developing an optional utility to convert Wordstar files, but again no shipping date has been announced.) If you do import ASCII files, note that Einstein includes a carriage return at the end of each line.

In short, Einstein Writer (\$75) has similar or fewer features than the competition, limited file size, no mail-merge capability, complex command sequences, and restricted file conversion ability. We therefore recommend this product only for those who find its split-screen approach to form letters congenial or who are limited to floppy disk computers. Otherwise, another product in this group is likely to be more satisfactory.

PFS: PROFESSIONAL WRITE

Professional Write has a superb menu system and is extraordinarily easy to use. Its screen shows exactly what will be on the paper, including margins top and bottom; and side to side. It has neat pull-down menus, with all the selections clearly marked. It also supports command shortcuts to invoke most of the system's functions when you want to bypass the menus. And



PFS: Professional Write lets you print headers and footers. They can be two lines long with 64 characters in each line.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

PFS: Professional Write

List price, \$199. Version tested (1.0) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 320K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives. Software Publishing Corp., 1901 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA 94039; (415) 962-8910.

Pros: Exceptionally easy to learn and use; first-rate speller and useful synonym finder; superior mailing list (fixed field) system. **Cons:** Files limited to 60K; some limits on ability to exploit printer features; only single and double spacing. Recommended strongly for its ease of use. A good choice for small offices with modest document preparation, needs, correspondence, and significant mailing list applications. It's less effective if long documents are required.

because it holds all text in memory, Professional Write is fast.

The program does have a fine mailing list system that offers fixed-field, address book type records. Each mail file can run 256 records, and any number of mail files can be accessed. In conjunction with this address book, PFS: Professional Write can handle sophisticated mailing list activities.

Other strengths include its support of macros, its line drawing feature, and its word count facility. You can also convert files from DCA/RFT and other formats. In addition, a spokeswoman said the firm is about to begin bundling a third-party conversion utility to let you import files from Word Perfect, Multimate, Microsoft Word, and Wordstar.

A useful feature is that, when you name files, you can add comments describing the file. You can then view those comments when you ask for a directory of your PFS files. You can also lock documents with passwords to prevent unauthorized access.

Professional Write has an excellent speller with about 77,000 words; it operates directly on the screen text. There's also a useful synonym finder, although it's not quite a thesaurus and not as sophisticated as the thesaurus in Webster's New World Writer (see below).

Professional Write's principal shortcoming is its 60K file size limit (about 30 pages of text). Consequently, the program is not for offices that frequently prepare lengthy reports or documents.

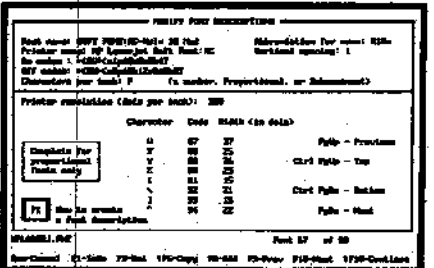
Professional Write supports an extensive list of printers, but you can get only single and double spacing without having to insert special printer commands. You must also use special commands to get microjustification.

Even with these limitations, PFS: Professional Write (\$199) is an excellent program for those who have strong mailing list applications and who need a quick, effective word processor for correspondence and short reports. The outstanding user interface is one of this program's most attractive and competitive features.

Q&A WRITE

Q&A Write is one of the strongest competitors in this group. One reason is that it is quite easy to grasp. It has a graceful user interface with obvious menus, clean screens, and full on-line help indexed to the manual.

On a system with a full 640K of memory, Q&A Write has a maximum file size of 240 to 260K, or about 130 pages of single-spaced text. This makes it more than adequate for most writing projects. Like PFS: Professional Write, Q&A Write holds all text in memory.



Symantec's Q&A Write has a feature that lets you add new fonts as they become available.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Q&A Write

List price, \$199. Version tested (1.0) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 384K RAM, (512K RAM recommended), DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives; hard disk recommended. Symantec Corp., 10201 Torre Ave., Cupertino, CA 95014; (408) 253-9600.

Pros: Outstandingly effective user interface and help system; outstanding editing speed; superior printer support especially for lasers; much better than average card file system; includes math and imports a variety of file formats including graphics. **Cons:** File size limited to about 240K on 640K system. Recommended as the system of choice in this group for all users except those for whom the extra features of Volkswriter 3 are essential.

Q&A Write supports all the conventional editing features, but two attributes set it apart: its exceptionally full printer support and its superior card file system. Q&A Write supports a wide range of printers and is especially strong in laser printer support, handling postscript devices and a wide range of cartridges and soft fonts for the HP Laserjet. In addition, a facility for creating new font descriptions lets you add new fonts as they become available.

Those preparing form letters and mailing lists will appreciate Q&A Write's card file feature. It can handle 1,000 cards with variable format. You are not limited to specific fields but can construct the cards in almost any way needed. The card file manager can select with an extensive set of conditions and can sort on multiple fields.

Q&A Write does column and row math, including average, count, total, multiply, and divide. It imports files from Wordstar, Lotus 1-2-3, and a variety of other formats, but not DCA. As we were going to press, we learned that Symantec has plans to release a \$29 conversion utility to translate DCA files and to let you import files from Word Perfect, Wordstar, and other programs. Q&A Write will also print graphics generated by 1-2-3 or other files compatible with GW Basic Bsave, a file format.

A lot of factors make Q&A Write (\$199) the best in this group. Although not quite as powerful as Volkswriter 3, Q&A Write is much easier to use, is easy to learn, has superb printer support, and includes a superior card file system.

TEXTRA

Textra's strong suits are excellent editing commands, an outstanding help system, and a complete dictionary system. The program has all the normal editing features, including sophisticated search and replace capabilities and a useful combination of menus and control key commands. The program can handle only 60K of text, some 30 single-spaced pages, and can import only ASCII files.

The dictionary, however, has some unique features. Its browse feature, for example, lets you look through the dictionary to check for hyphenation. Unfortunately, it doesn't hyphenate automatically.

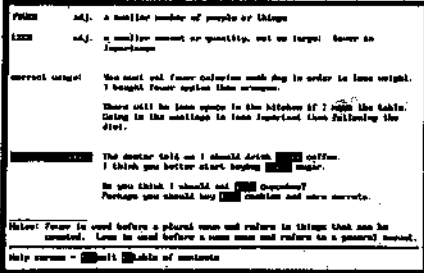
The dictionary also has a look-up command, which

PRODUCT SUMMARY

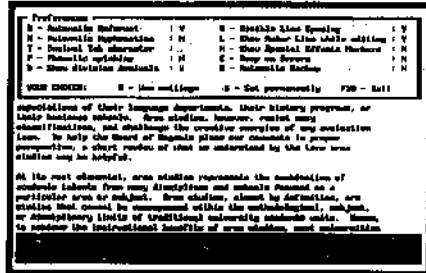
Textra

List price, \$29. Optional \$40 subscription gets extra the spelling checker and other upgrades. Version tested (2.0, enhanced by Writer 86/87 upgrade) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives. Ann Arbor Software, 3455 Division, Ann Arbor, MI 48104; (313) 769-9085.

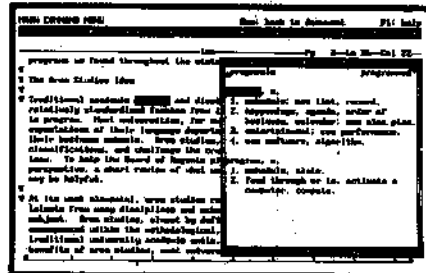
Pros: Excellent editing; outstanding help system; very complete dictionary system with browse feature; excellent search and replace features. **Cons:** Limited file size; no mail-merge or form letter capability.



Textra's usage module offers help on troublesome homonyms and usage points.



Volkswriter 3's preferences menu lets you indicate that the settings be used just for this session or as a default.



Webster's thesaurus separates the choices into noun and verb groups and offers further listings for you to check.

works as follows: When you begin typing a word, the dictionary immediately displays 19 words that start with the letters you type. As you continue typing the word, the program matches the 19 words more closely to the word you're typing. All the words displayed have their hyphens in place. The speller can also integrate user-generated dictionaries into the main dictionary.

A usage module offers guidance on troublesome homonyms (like principal/principle) and usage points (like fewer/less). The screen shows the pairs, you select one, and the usage module gives definitions and examples of correct and incorrect usage.

Textra does not have a mailing list facility and cannot do form letters or mail-merge functions. It also lacks sophisticated printer support, although you can imbed printer codes in the text. There is no math module and there are no decimal tabs.

In short, Textra is a nice, inexpensive, user-friendly basic word processing system. Its dictionary with usage module is excellent, its editing quick, and its help superior. But the lack of mail-merge, the limited file size, and the limited printer support restrict the range of applications for which this system is suited. The basic program sells for \$29; to get the speller, you must sign up for the optional \$40 update subscription plan.

VOLKSWRITER 3

Within this group, Volkswriter is by far the most powerful and feature-rich. A descendant of one of the first word processing programs available for the IBM PC, Volkswriter is known for its quick and effective editing, clean organization, and spartan menus.

Volkswriter 3 has a fine dictionary, automatic hyphenation, math and sorting, and a good file conversion program that supports DCA. Its search and replace function is very fast, although it is quite slow at reformatting files.

The program has a good merge facility for preparing mailing lists and form letters, although other programs in this group make it easier to handle your mailing list.

Among Volkswriter's special features is an extensive customization capability that lets the user get the most from any printer. The program allows any keyboard code to be mapped to any printer code, allowing you to print foreign language alphabets and a variety of mathematical symbols. Volkswriter will cut and paste arbitrary columns or rectangles from the text, and it supports style sheets.

Unfortunately, not much on-line help is available.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Volkswriter 3

List price: \$295. Version tested (1.0) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, two floppy disk drives; hard disk recommended. Lifetree Software Inc., 411 Pacific St., Monterey, CA 93940. (800) 543-3872 (outside CA); (800) 831-8733 (inside CA); (408) 373-4904; (408) 373-4718.

Pros: Very powerful, more features than most; sorting and math available; multiple layouts on disk; customizable keyboard; unlimited file size. Cons: No mail-merge and minimal on-line help; mailing list management less sophisticated than other word processors; no business and individual mail merge; no support for the unique features and who's-who lists; no on-line help; especially valuable for those who use mail-merge or non-standard character sets are required.

Webster's most significant advantage is its outstanding thesaurus and its capability to handle multiple style sheets.

You can invoke a four-line menu at the top of the screen, a couple of status lines at the bottom, and several submenus. But Volkswriter 3 does not have any help screens describing how to use the commands or telling you what they accomplish. In addition, you cannot define a block by marking a starting point and moving the cursor toward the top of the document. You must define all blocks from top to bottom.

Nonetheless, Volkswriter 3 (\$295) stands out for several reasons — its exceptional speed and flexibility and its outstanding dictionary, hyphenation, sorting, and math. This program stands out as one of the most powerful systems included in this summary. We recommend it for users who work with a word processor frequently, who need to edit very long documents, and who may have special foreign language or other symbol requirements that require flexibility.

WEBSTER'S NEW WORLD WRITER

Built around a substantial dictionary and an outstanding thesaurus, Webster's New World Writer (1.05) offers an easy-to-use word processing system. Webster's will handle documents of any size, works reasonably fast, and supports the normal complement of editing and formatting commands.

Its major disadvantage is that it will not do any mail-merge or form letter management. (A spokesman said this feature would be included in the next major upgrade; shipping date unannounced.) Its most significant advantage is its outstanding thesaurus and its capability to handle multiple style sheets.

In addition, Webster's has some minor but useful features not always available in programs of this class.

Webster's will change the case from upper to lower or vice versa within a block. It will allow document comments that appear in the text but do not print. Its search and replace capability is flexible and effective; it

works both forward and backward in the file. You can insert the system time and date into your document with a keystroke.

In addition, Webster's supports line drawing, letting you put boxes and similar figures into the text. Webster's will let you change your formats as often as you like, and at the same time you can protect a block of text from a format change. This is useful for tables and other specially arranged material. The program controls for widows and orphans, although you can't turn off this feature.

The speller is of the sort that reads, marks, and displays a list of unrecognized words. This is less effective than spellers that work on the screen text. Further, the speller chokes if it finds too many unique unrecognized words — which can happen if your text has too many proper names. If this occurs, you'll have to break the document into smaller, separate files to check the spelling, a major disadvantage.

Webster's is quite easy to learn and use. It has an easily understood menu system with lots of explanation.

For several reasons, we think this program is aimed at the writer preparing manuscripts for subsequent editing and publishing. Webster's New World Writer (\$99) supports all the normal print enhancements (bold, underline, etc.), but as mentioned above, it has no mail-merge or list management facilities. Thus it cannot do form letters or mailing lists, a serious hindrance for office use. And while the exceptional thesaurus is useful for everyone, it's particularly valuable for writers searching for exactly the right word.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The eight word processing programs included here represent "easy" word processing at its best. They range from the very powerful, although not so easy-to-use, Volkswriter 3 to Q&A Write and PFS: Professional Write. These last two programs represent the best of the full-help, full-menu systems.

Dac Easy Word II, an inexpensive program, accommodates large files and will appeal to those wanting multiple windows. Einstein Writer is a good program but is not as effective as either Q&A Write or PFS: Professional Write. Easy Extra has a very good mailing list program, is extremely easy to use, and offers excellent printer support. However, unless large files are an essential requirement, Q&A Write and PFS: Professional Write are better choices. Textra is a good but limited product whose effectiveness is reduced by an absence of features and modest printer support.

Because of its large file size and excellent thesaurus, Webster's New World Writer is a good choice for authors. But the lack of a mail-merge feature makes it less suited for offices. Volkswriter 3, the most powerful program in this group, can also handle large files. But it offers little on-line help and is not as easy to use as competing programs.

Between Q&A Write and PFS: Professional Write, we prefer Q&A Write because it is at least as easy to use, has more power, and can handle larger documents. However, as is always the case with word processing programs, the key to satisfaction is the match between a user's needs and the program's features. All things being equal, we prefer more powerful programs to less powerful because user experience always leads to a need for more features.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Webster's New World Writer

List price: \$99. Version tested (1.05) available for IBM PCs, XT's, AT's, or compatibles. Requires 256K RAM, DOS 2.0 or higher, two floppy disk drives; hard disk recommended. Simon and Schuster, Software Division, 1 Gulf & Western Plaza, New York, NY 10023; (212) 373-8882.

Pros: Outstanding dictionary and especially thesaurus support; strong formatting and document preparation tools; unlimited document size. Cons: No mail-merge capability or form letter management; limit on number of unique words that can be checked by the speller. Recommended for writers preparing manuscripts for publication or lengthy reports. Not recommended for office work.