Software Reviews

Sprint

Word Processor Is Slick, Quick, and Powerful

By John Lombardi

Borland’s Chameleon-Like Product Mimics Old Favorites

Borland’s Sprint dashes into the bitefully contested word processing market with a slick editor, a powerful text formatter, and an innovative programming language for text processing.

Sprint and quick describe this innovative product, whose special features include a range of alternate user interfaces that make this the “Rich Little” of word processing. Sprint partially mimics the operation of popular word processors so that corporate staffs can standardize word processing with minimal retraining. Although it’s not for everyone, Sprint has a variety of nice features that make it an attractive text processing system for a number of users.

FEATURES:

Within the context of high-powered office/professional word processing programs, Sprint falls somewhere in the upper half. It is very flexible and possesses an impressively rich complement of editing commands for moving text, searching and replacing, moving/copying/pasting, and applying enhancements such as underlining or fonts. The Sprint makes a few fundamental features available in the ilk of WordStar 2000 or WordPerfect 5.0. Also, Sprint divides editing and formatting into two steps, much like word processors of the past, which tends to be less convenient than the conventional office/professional word processors used today.

Sprint has no math capability for columns or rows, its sorting routine is primitive, and its process of the printed page is poor by comparison to the best in this class. Combined with the absence of useful graphic capabilities (with the exception of user-defined tables and outlines), Sprint’s professional word processing feature list falls below the best in the class.

However, the Sprint systems include features not available or less effectively implemented by the market leaders. In addition to its native Borland interface, the alternative user interface permits users trained on Microsoft Word or MultiMate, for example, to begin using Sprint immediately. Sprint operates like (but doesn’t look like) any of several popular systems — EMACS, Wordstar, Final Word II, MS Word, Multimate, Sidekick, Word Perfect, or WordStar. These interfaces are included with the product now, but, according to a Sprint spokesperson, plans to bundle them later in the year.

A mouse can also be used reasonably effectively, for those addicted to the buttoned bottom.

Moreover, Sprint can have 24 files and multiple windows open simultaneously, and a host of facilities exist for moving, copying, cutting, and pasting between windows and files. Yet for all these features, the one element that sets Sprint apart from its competitors in the word processing programming language. Sprint can be made into almost anything you want that handles text. Practically every operation contained in the system can be programmed to operate in any way and in any combination. This programmability, of course, gives Sprint the versatility of handling the language of other systems, or like no other system at all. If the capability exists within the Sprint word processing engine, it can be programmed to operate in combination with any other function.

The possibilities for custom-designed text processing systems, or the creation of automatic formatting procedures to be used by relatively unskilled and semi-skilled users, is almost endless. This capability goes beyond macro or keystroke recording. It is more akin to the use of high-level programming languages. The starting point of Sprint offers complete control over all aspects of the document, from the view on the screen to the printed page. It is possible to create documents with complex formatting that will be indistinguishable from professionally produced documents. This is accomplished by using the available features to create custom-designed text processing systems. The system can be programmed to operate in any way and in any combination. This programmability, of course, gives Sprint the versatility of handling the language of other systems, or like no other system at all. If the capability exists within the Sprint word processing engine, it can be programmed to operate in combination with any other function.

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WORD PERFECT 5.0 • INFOWORLD BENCHMARKS

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Leader: Bill Zucklich, vice president, Avalon Development Co.

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For information resource systems managers.

Among the topics you’ll explore in detail are the roles Apple, IBM, DEC and others are playing as suppliers in the CD-ROM marketplace. The workshop will present options and solutions for integrating CD-ROM into your environment and will cover key points to remember in setting up CD-ROM workstations or large information-handling facilities.

Leader: Joel Schwartz, president, Licenex
Software Reviews

Tuesday — September 27

Choose two comprehensive, half-day tutorials taught by the best in the industry. At the end of the course, you’ll have a working knowledge of the hardware, software and applications issues that will affect your organization, and you’ll know what to look for when you visit the vendor exhibits. Each afternoon session is designed to complement a morning session (see chart below), however, there is no obligation to attend the tutorials in this sequence.

T1 T2 T3 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
T4 T5 T6 1:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

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- CD-ROM REVIEW
- Datanomics
- Discovery Systems
- Federal Computer Week
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- Computer Systems
- Optical Media International
- Optum Interactive Services
- Personal Software Library
- Fetch/Delfox Optimal Reference Technology
- Fairchild
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- Silver Platter
- Sony
- TELSTAR Publishing
- or others

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- Knowledgebase Laser Magnetic Storage
- LINK Resources
- Meridian Data
- Microsoft
- MVS
- Minicom Records
- N/L
- McPhee
- Text Acquisition
- On-Line
- Computer Systems
- Optical Media International
- Optum Interactive Services
- Personal Software Library
- Fetch/Delfox Optimal Reference Technology
- Fairchild
- Optima
- Silver Platter
- Sony
- TELSTAR Publishing
- or others

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- Introduction to the Mechanics of CD-ROM
- Optical vs. Magnetic Storage and Retrieval Products
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DOCUMENTATION:

The compulsions and necessities of this product demand even more care and sophistication in documentation. And Sprit includes three large well-presented manuals plus a handbook on the alternative interface. There is about 2000 reference pages, including and guiding users through processing by difficult and sophisticated commands and operations.

The documentation includes all of the information about the program's features. It is thoroughly documented and explained for novices and advanced users alike. The programming lan-
gauge is also covered:
Sprint includes good on-line help which is context-sensitive and comprehensive. Error messages, by and large, prove helpful although the print-time format error messages can be somewhat cryptic to a new user. The formatter will not print the document until formatting errors are corrected, a nice "smart" feature. A disk file contains corrections to the user manual.

The well-produced, easy-to-read, fully indexed, and comprehensive manuals, combined with free help screens, ease Sprint's very good in documentation.

EASE OF LEARNING:
Learning any new system requires attention and care, and Sprint is no exception. However, the good manuals and help screens greatly simplify the learning process, and for users familiar with a word processor, that Sprint mimics the learning process is quick indeed. We took less than half an hour to install the system, most of which involved copying the disks (totaling about 12.5 megabytes). A user new to word processing could become basically familiar with the system in under two hours.

Given the good help system, clear menus, alternate user interfaces, and helpful documentation, we rate easy of learning very good.

EASE OF USE:
A good working knowledge of Sprint, if not complete mastery of its features, requires a few days of concentrated effort. Many keyboard shortcuts are possible, and ease of use can be enhanced through customization.

For those interested in the programming language and the system's extensive customization capabilities, learning time will depend entirely on programmer's background and skills. It should set aside several months and be sure to have a good user manual.

Some Sprint design characteristics inhibit ease of use. The standard setting of the font and font size in the editor makes the preparation of moderately complex documents more difficult than it need be. Compounded by the absence of a good graphic editor and the unavailability of a real module, Sprint's ease of use leaves something to be desired.

While ease of use is enhanced by the many-alternative user interfaces, that requires switching between word processors, using them can be frustrating because they do not provide a 100 percent match. Consequently, you find yourself seeking more and more ultimately resorting to the Borland User Interface, which is the word processor's native and most complete interface.

However, in compensation, Sprint's sophisticated storage system will make editing detail-oriented documents much easier. With enough investment of time and expertise, a power user can create a template, import and export documents, and create word processing system that matches almost exactly any particular set of preferences. At that moment, Sprint becomes the easiest word processor to use.

For highly complex documents, long documents, projects requiring many indexes, lists, and multi-task formats, Sprint is easy to use. However, for producing correspondence, long documents, reports, requiring graphic inclusion, or other print requests, is offered by major products such as Office Writer, WordStar, WordPerfect, and WordPerfect.

With these many ease of use features taken into consideration, we rate ease of use very good.

ERROR HANDLING:
Sprint protects the user against data loss in many ways. The system can be set to maintain a complete backup file of all changes made to the file during an editing session. Should there be a system crash or power failure, this backup file brings up the text with all information saved and ready. It will handle not just the file being edited at the time of the crash, but all open files, up to Sprint's limit of 24. The backup frequency has a default of three seconds, but you can set it to other time lengths.

The Undo command only has one level and undoes only text blocks. It doesn't save every change or position as it does with the Del SITE or BACKSPACE keys.

Sprint always prompts you when an action would cause the file to be exited without saving, and the program provides a special feature to close all open files at once. The formatter always makes a copy of the main file before proceeding to
As microcomputers continue to take over desk space in every corporation, and as microcomputer hardware and software become more complex (LANs, OS/2), it gets harder and harder to organize, track, and analyze effectively the resources dedicated to these machines. The micro support manager who can’t use this information in a management tool may have a difficult time justifying his or her job. Micro Resource Manager Professional, from the Atrium Information Group, is a powerful data management tool aimed at those growing problems.

Whether you generate over 500 different reports ranging from a “what’s where” list to minute-between-failures for particular manufactured hardware. There are 18 reports in the management analysis section alone, and you can also create custom reports and perform ad hoc queries.

**FEATURES:**

- **MRRM** can save time for you and the users you support. It can decrease the frustration that comes from managing the large amount of information that micro managers have to deal with. More specifically, it generates reports that are easier to read and understand.

**–** It also includes a feature that allows you to generate reports on a variety of hardware and software components, which can be very useful for network administrators.

**–** The program also includes a powerful search function that allows you to quickly find specific information within the database.

**–** It includes a feature that allows you to monitor the performance of your network, which can be very useful for network administrators.

**–** It includes a feature that allows you to create custom reports, which can be very useful for network administrators.

**–** It includes a feature that allows you to export data to other programs, which can be very useful for network administrators.

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