Total Word 1.2 Adds Speed, Other Features

New version enhances speed and fixes bugs in its thesaurus and spelling checker.

BY JOHN LOMBARDI REVIEW BOARD

With the appearance of Total Word 1.0 last spring, the creators of the highly successful Volkswriter series of word processing programs, Lifetree Software, pushed their way into the professional word processing market.

Total Word originally impressed us as a slow, relatively powerful, and easy-to-use system. It was complete with spell checker, grammar checker, and synonyms but not all of the features present in such market leaders as Word Perfect, Microsoft Word, Word for Windows, and similar heavy hitters.

In this review, we present a review update covering Total Word 1.2, which significantly enhances the old version’s speed, fixes a number of thesaurus and spelling checker bugs, and adds a few features.

While a useful upgrade, this version does not represent a major enhancement, although it improves Total Word’s report card scores. The scoring and weighting criteria are based on our March 28 product comparison of office/professional word processors.

Perhaps the most useful changes in Total Word 1.2 involve the addition of centered, flush right, and tabular text. For the latter, you can set either a decimal point or a decimal comma for the tab.

Facilitating preparation of side-by-side columnar data, the flush left (standard) and flush right (right justified, left ragged) tabs permit a two-column presentation in which inside facing column edges are ragged. Two related commands offer a Shift-Tab keystroke that sets a temporary left margin and an Alt-Q command that moves the cursor to the next tab stop without inserting a tab stop.

To support proportionally spaced print, Total Word’s screen now shows character positions in 1/10-inch positions; a screen indicator of 50 character positions really means 5.0 inches.

Additionally, Total Word 1.2 has improved the special keyboard for chemistry symbols and has added support for a variety of new printers. There are also improvements in the Snapshot graphics capture utility with additional support for graphics cards, Lotus 1-2-3 and Quattro graphics displays, among others.

Finally, Total Word 1.2 offers five conversion utility disks — only available by mail at the time we received our update — that handle DOC/RFT and a few other major word processing formats. The first two disks are free to registered users and additional format conversion disks cost $20 each.

PERFORMANCE:
Total Word 1.2 performance in correspondence is almost identical to version 1.0. Total Word’s search and replace feature performs well, permitting a considerable amount of flexibility. Search and replace speed has been greatly
Enhanced tab support is a welcome addition to Total Word and allows users to experiment with a variety of tab formats. Although other programs include more options and flexibility in designing indexes and tables of contents. We score this category satisfactorily.

Footnotes earn a good score with a particularly easy-to-use footnote window. Footnote numbers appear on screen and the numbers change when notes are added or deleted. There is no real document history screen in Total Word, although the program's nice redlining and comment facilities compensate to add up to a satisfactory score.

A workable system attaches font and style templates to the file name extension of a document. (You may find this good or bad, depending on your preferences.)

Post controls and changes in styles require simple commands, but we think naming, layout might be easier to remember and use than the Total Word numbering system.

Overall, however, fonts and styles are better than average and we rate them good.

Graphics integration involves the use of the Snapshot screen-grabber program. Loaded into memory before running Total Word, Snapshot captures most screen displays for integration in Total Word documents. While the image can be cropped, the sophistication of the program is much less than in competitive products such as WordPerfect 5.0. Further, Snapshot is memory-resident and nothing in the documentation indicates how to remove the program once installed.

Although its hardware compatibility has improved, it still chokes on some Hercules compatible devices. Because Total Word cannot incorporate any standard graphics files directly (Loris PCL, PCX, etc.), we continue to rate its graphics integration poor.

Nonetheless, one of the major areas of improvement in Total Word 1.2, exceeds the average in many of our tests. In total, Total Word's speed is above the norm in most categories and earns a good rating.

Total Word's compatibility with other word processing files still compares unfavorably to competitive programs. To address this problem, the vendor will soon (it was unavailable at press time) offer file conversion software that will permit compatibility with DCA/Write Word, Word Perfect 4.2 and 5.0, DisplayWrite 2, and 3, FFT, Multimate, and 1-2-3.

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