**Displaywrite 4 Emerges With Welcome Enhancements**

However, it still falls far short of word processors such as Microsoft Word and Word Perfect.

**BY JOHN LOOMAND, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR**

Formatting capabilities include support for multiple parallel columns, and you can create newspaper-style columns that even include a column balancing option not included in such products as WordPerfect. You can specify text as left or right justified or centered; moreover, centering can be done around any point on the ruler line. Widow lines can also be controlled. However, there are no right-side page or portrait/landscape orientation options, and vertical units are still expressed as lines rather than inches. While there is no graphics print preview, a general preview is available that at least shows line and page breaks, if not a WYSIWYG layout. The page orientation problem, combined with other file format issues such as fonts, makes the product's acceptance by administrators and word processors challenging. The mail merge and document-creation functions remain pre-3.x level products, although the new version has some improved features. However, the product lacks, however, any reasonable error-correction facility during a merge. In balance, we rate mail merging satisfactory.

While you can generate a simple outline and combine outline levels, you cannot collapse or expand an outline as in a traditional electronic outline. Since you can view a second document while you work, you can also view an outline. These capabilities are sufficient for a satisfactory outlining score.

Unlike most competition, Displaywrite 4 supports neither table of contents nor index generation. A separate IBM product is required for this feature.

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DOCUMENTATION:
DisplayWrite's documentation is reasonably complete, but the indexes are only fair and the manual has no glossary. However, the quality of the Getting Started manual is quite good and the reference and technical manuals are useful.
All in all, documentation earns a satisfactory score.

EASE OF LEARNING:
This version of DisplayWrite is relatively easy to learn, thanks to elaborate context-sensitive help screens that let you find almost anything required to complete a task. Moreover, the transitions between DisplayWrite's various functions (such as tasks in IBM parlance) are smooth and virtually transparent. There is no on-line tutorial, but the Getting Started manual includes a good written tutorial. It is still difficult, though, for inexperienced users to learn how to manage some of the more complicated features. We rate ease of learning good.

EASE OF USE:
The combination of good menus and the extensive context-sensitive help screens also enhances ease of use. But while some functions can be called with a single keystroke, most require selection from a menu. Also, pagination can be cumbersome. When we combine these hindrances with DisplayWrite's limited cursor controls, the program's effectiveness for experienced users is reduced. We rate ease of use satisfactory.

ERROR HANDLING:
DisplayWrite saves a backup file whenever you begin editing. An unprompted termination can delete significant portions of newly entered text, although a special recovery utility improves the chances of getting your data back. The Undo command only recovers the most recent block deletion, and not deletions performed with the Backspace or Del keys.

We were able to hang the program after trying to merge data with a form-letter template, requiring a reboot to continue. Fortunately, each time we reproduced this аппарат bug and restarted the computer, the merge had been successfully performed and data integrity wasn't maintained.

Considering our problems along with DisplayWrite's backup and recovery features, we rate error handling satisfactory.

SUPPORT:
We discovered that IBM has finally decided to provide support for DisplayWrite. One year of technical support costs $99.95, and a do-it-yourself kit is available for $69.95. IBM's customer service people were friendly, but the merger had been successfully performed and data integrity wasn't maintained.

We rate support policies good. We were able to reach technical support quickly; they called us back the next day after leaving a message in the morning. The answers were correct and adequate, and the support personnel were friendly. We rate technical support satisfactory.

VALUE:
While DisplayWrite 4, Version 3 is better than the previous version, it still falls considerably below the standard of WordPerfect or WordStar and is less than that of WordStar 5.5. For example, it does well with large, structured, or multi- or un-merged documents, however, and is a natural consideration for shops standardized on IBM equipment and software.

At $495, DisplayWrite is a satisfactory value.

John Lombardi is provost of a major university and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967.

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