WordPerfect Takes a Powerful Next Step

WordPerfect's professional word processor may bring the Next system into the mainstream.

By John Lombardo

As the Next Computer enters mainstream desktop computing, it requires a professional word processing system. Unix tools won't do, and the included writing program, WriteNow, doesn't measure up to the standards of professional word processors. WordPerfect Corp. has the only product that fits the bill, and WordPerfect for Next is a strong word processor with most of the functionality of the DOS version and a few Next extras.

This review departs somewhat from our normal procedure. InfoWorld reviews normally depend on a rigorous comparison of products sharing similar hardware and operating system platforms. However, WordPerfect has no competitor in the Next domain of professional word processing with which to compare. So we've taken as our reference point the current state of the art in PC word processing products: Microsoft Word for Windows, Lotus Ami Pro, and WordStar/NT. (Ed: For reviews of these products, see product comparison, January 7, Page 51.)

Features:

WordPerfect for Next translates WordPerfect 5.0 to the Next environment. This translation captures most of the important features of the DOS product and makes them easier to use and understand through the Next's graphical operating system. Although not as sophisticated and powerful as Word For Windows, for example, and missing the pivot features included in WordPerfect 5.1, such as an equation generator, automatic bullets, and tables — WordPerfect for Next offers competitive performance.

Performance:

Basic editing: WordPerfect for Next has all of the basic editing tools that are expected in a full-featured word processing program, with the exception of a rectangular-arranged paste and cut. WordPerfect Next performs complex search and replace, handles multiple tab types, and will include tab leaders. Automatic hyphenation, proofreading, and proofing are included. WordPerfect Next supports columnar documents. In addition, the program will justify text left, right, center, or full. We rate basic editing very good.

Layout: WordPerfect Next has sophisticated layout features. Layout capabilities include multiple columns, binding margins, WYSIWYG editing in columns, as well as complete ruler and grid control. In addition, the program can scale, move, and rotate objects in the WPG environment. There is a table editor that allows you to design columns and rows, but you can't put a repeating feature or a line between columns automatically. There is a table editor, but it can't edit formulas. The program also supports the effective but very complicated WordPerfect DOS math capability.

WordPerfect for Next offers widow and orphan control, vertical justification, and stylus. There are also multiple views, which allow you to copy between documents and edit them simultaneously. In general, the display of formatting in the WPG environment is excellent.

Integration:

WordPerfect Next easily imports and exports text, graphics, and multimedia elements. The program also offers full-screen and file-level compatibility, making it easy to transfer documents between programs.

WordPerfect Next also offers a powerful database feature that allows you to create and manipulate tables and forms. This feature is particularly useful for creating and editing complex forms and reports.

Conclusion:

WordPerfect for Next is a solid word processing program that offers a comprehensive set of features and tools. The program is well-suited for use on the NEXT computer, and it provides a robust and powerful alternative to other word processing programs available on the market. Whether you're a professional writer, a student, or a casual user, WordPerfect for Next is a great choice for anyone who needs a powerful and flexible word processing program.
and proportionally spaced type on-screen is excellent for those displaying small-screen. These tend to have irregular letter spacing that disappear when the magnification level is increased. You can invoke a widow. Since this shows all the special formatting tokens, which is equivalent to the Report Codes window in WordPerfect for DOS. We rate layout excellent.

Style sheets: WordPerfect for Next has been pre-labeled styles for headers, footers, footnotes, and tables of contents. You can transfer style information from one document to another, and styles can exist independently of documents. We rate style sheets very good.

Feature support: WordPerfect for Next uses the Next's required system printer, a 400-dpi PostScript device. WordPerfect user both its own font and Next fonts. It also supports learning. WordPerfect's font selection procedure is very similar. It uses a font selection. For example, we compared output to Word for Windows, and we found the WordPerfect and Next fonts to be identical. However, the Word for Windows printer was a 300-dpi PostScript printer, so the resolution with WordPerfect for Next may not be as accurate. We rate font/printer support excellent.

Reference tools: Reference tools include, un-numbering and multiple-level outlining. The program supports footnotes and endnotes in an unusual manner, as well as cross references, tables of authorities, indexes, tables of contents, and other lists. WordPerfect for Next also has comments, redlining, and strikethrough. We rate reference tools very good.

Import/Export: Import and export to other than Next is limited. WordPerfect for Next reads and writes files from WordPerfect Versions 4.2 through 5.1 for DOS. It converts them exactly into WordPerfect for Next—except for fonts from Version 5.1 that are not included in the Next version, such as tables and equations. However, these attributes are preserved and can be used in WordPerfect for Next.

WordPerfect for Next will handle ASCII and the Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF). WordPerfect for Next can also export ASCII for DOS platforms. It will read WordPerfect graphic files written in the DOS WPG format and will write ASCII files for DOS.

While we normally do not give high ratings for this level of compatibility, it is important to note to the users that many Windows products are not compatible with WordPerfect for Next.

Networking: The Next machine can share files, hard disks, and directories over a network—for WordPerfect or any other application. (We did not run network-specific tests for this review.) We rate networking excellent.

Speed: Next is an inherently more powerful system than our stand-alone Windows platform. In general, we found WordPerfect for Next accepts quickly. However, if sometimes needed to go to disk to find some information—help screens, for example—which delayed response time. Graphic response was quick, reformating fast, and saving reasonable. We rate speed good.

Macro: WordPerfect for Next has the command strings that include the commands from the WordPerfect command set. Macros can be attached to key combinations. The program is a macro editor. This version looks promising for constructs such as "Redo (Do Until)" which is available in

WordPerfect DOS 5.1 and most of the Windows products in the Word for Windows class. We rate macros satisfactory.

**DOCUMENTATION:**
As is the practice with Next, all WordPerfect documentation exists on-line. Although it is reasonably comprehensive and readily available, we didn't find it as complete or as easy to use as the traditional printed WordPerfect reference manual. On-line documentation works best when you understand the product but need information on the details of a feature. It works less well when used by novices who are familiar with the general product category. The on-line help is not context sensitive. We rate documentation satisfactory.

**EASE OF LEARNING:**
WordPerfect for Next is relatively easy to learn, especially if you have already mastered the NextStep operating environment. Most functions are easy to follow, the on-line documentation contains most of what's needed, and the dialog boxes are self-explanatory. The
ERROR HANDLING:
Error handling appears to be reasonably
dependable. There is an undo button that accumulates
deletions as long as the insertion point isn't moved, which is essentially a one-
level undo. Although the system prompts you before exiting an unsaved file, the
provision of windows and boxes can lead the inexperienced user to lose a file. There
is also a timed backup feature. We rate error handling satisfactory.

SUPPORT:
Support policies: WordPerfect offers un-
limited free, but not toll-free, technical
support. Support hours are 7 a.m. to 6
p.m. Mountain time, Monday through
Friday. Fax support is also available. We
rate support policies good.

Technical support: The technical sup-
port staff responded promptly and
effectively when we called. WordPerfect for
Next has its own support line. We rate
WordPerfect's technical support very
good.

VALUE:
Relative to others: Next word processing
products, of which there are few, are
more directly competitive. Word-
Perfect is a strong value at $49. It's not
quite as good as the best of the Windows
products, nor as powerful as the latest
version of WordPerfect for DOS,
but within the Next context it is a fine
product. WordPerfect for Next is a very
good value.

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