

REVIEWS / TEST DRIVES

First Look / Kevin Strehlo

PowerPoint 3 is great for those always running late

In keeping with the *InfoWorld* tradition of real-world evaluation, I waited until midnight on the day this First Look was due to fire up Microsoft's new PowerPoint 3 and crank out a presentation.

Sure, it would have been more realistic to create a presentation during a coast-to-coast red-eye flight, but I settled for working in the dark on a laptop without referring to the documentation while my wife slept on the other side of the room.

Under that typical mode of producing a presentation, I made an incredible discovery. Moving from PowerPoint 2 to 3 was like moving from Windows 2 to 3. PowerPoint has gone from being a burden you tolerate to a leader in its field.

Whereas PowerPoint 2.0 was exasperating, Version 3.0 is full of thoughtful touches. For example, it is easy to identify presentations when you need to pull previously created slides: A visual preview of the first slide in a presentation is shown as part of the Open File dialog box. Without it, I can never remember what's in presentations with oblique names such as BRKNBARB.PPT or LINSBLUB.PPT.

In functional areas where PowerPoint 2.0 was way behind the competition — special slide-show effects (fades, wipes, etc.), the ability to create graphics inside the program, and a reasonable way of doing organization charts and flow charts — PowerPoint 3.0 has caught up.

And PowerPoint 3.0 jumps ahead in its leverage of such new Windows 3.1 features as TrueType and object linking and embedding (OLE). It is even possible to embed a video presentation built with a multimedia application within a presentation.

EFFICIENCY IS KEY. But the key attraction for busy professionals is PowerPoint 3.0's efficiency with the basics.

Outlining is its biggest strength, with ease of combining old slides close behind. Add the ease of applying a unifying style template afterward — instead of having to declare styles up front — and you probably have the efficiency champ. The topper is PowerPoint 3.0's capability to change from laser printer overheads to 35mm slides without fear of reformatting and forcing an edit of a whole presentation.



NOTHING'S PERFECT. But don't wait until an hour before you have to leave for the airport to install it.

Last night my wife dreamed she was being ground to death very slowly, due no doubt to the sound of a floppy drive grinding for an hour as I installed 17 megabytes of program, fonts, and sample presentations/templates.

Once installed, PowerPoint made quick work of taking slides from an old PowerPoint 2.0 presentation and

an ASCII text outline.

I should have used Word for Windows to build the outline, because PowerPoint ignored the hierarchy of items indicated by an indentation. Each line ended in a hard return and, therefore, became the title of a new slide.

Fortunately, by highlighting a group of 10 slides and clicking the icon for demoting their level, I was able to turn them into automatically bulleted points of the preceding slide in seconds.

Contrast my near-instant comprehension of the new outlining interface with my befuddlement when trying to create an ordinary indented bullet chart the first time I used PowerPoint 2. Despite experience with several outlining programs, I was confused even after reading the 150 words of help text that ended, "It's easier than it sounds!"

TAPPING WINDOWS 3.1. Many of PowerPoint's strengths come from Microsoft's tapping of new Windows 3.1 features.

Support for OLE allows PowerPoint to share Word for Windows' graphing engine. Users get most of Excel's graphing features and its familiar graphing interface without cluttering the primary Powerhouse interface — graphing menus come into play only when actually creating a graph.

OLE also allows embedding of an actual Excel graph, which keeps your presentation updated with each change to the underlying Excel worksheet.

FINAL CONFESSION. OK, I'm going to be late putting presentations together even with an efficient tool like PowerPoint. But I'll make more planes using PowerPoint, especially if I have to transmit to a service bureau before heading to the airport.

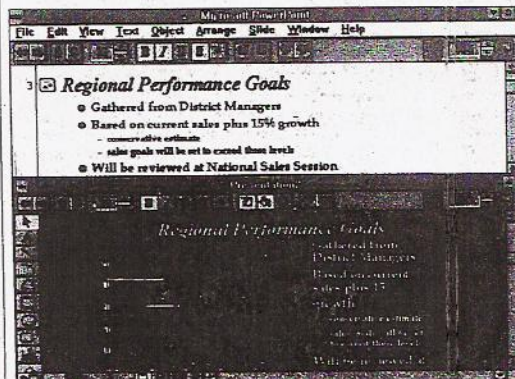
PowerPoint includes a communication program (an extra-cost option for most competing programs) that ships the normal terse PowerPoint files to Genographics for imaging instead of a PostScript file 10 times the size.

Ten minutes of saved transmission time means a lot when you're catching a plane.

Transmitting the native file also means Genographics can display and tweak the presentation once it receives it. And it actually does tweak, if only to protect itself. You see, Microsoft and Genographics offer a money-back guarantee for all imaged slides.

Not bad for a product that retails for \$495. Updating from PowerPoint 2.0 for only \$99 is a real no-brainer.

Kevin Strehlo is *InfoWorld's* Editorial Director of Reviews and Testing.



PowerPoint 3 succeeds where Version 2 failed with better outlining, easier formatting, and the power to embed video.

WINDOWS WORD PROCESSOR

Midrange CA-Textor shines at mail merge

Lacks spreadsheet, macro language

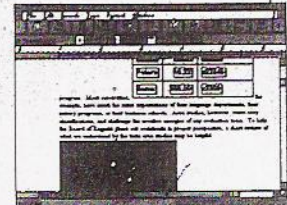
BY JOHN LOMBARDI
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Computer Associates recently shipped the first Windows version of CA-Textor, its lower priced word processor. A full installation of CA-Textor requires just 3½ megabytes of disk space, compared to upwards of 15 megabytes for programs such as Microsoft Word for Windows. Minimum installation of CA-Textor takes only 1 megabyte of space.

CA-Textor 6.0 lacks the bells and whistles that are available in professional word processors such as Lotus Ami Pro or Word for Windows. Now shipping from Computer Associates, CA-Textor is a midrange word processor for Windows 3.0 or 3.1.

In CA-Textor, you'll find the basics — cut and paste, graphics insertion, table of contents, outline numbering, multiple paragraph formats, full character formatting, table editing, a spelling checker, and a thesaurus.

You can edit your text in three views, including WYSIWYG. There is also a print



CA-Textor has all the basics, including graphics insertion and table editing.

recognition (OCR) programs that promises to catch typical OCR errors. The program comes with French and English (both British and American) dictionaries — a nice bonus at no extra cost.

Import and export of files — including ASCII, DCA/RFT, WordPerfect through 5.0, Microsoft Word through 5.0, and Rich Text Format — takes place effortlessly. CA-Textor will also support WordPerfect 5.1 files, as long as they don't contain 5.1-specific features, such as tables.

CA-Textor's elaborate system of fields can include formu-

CA-Textor offers competent editing, some useful features, and superior field functions for complex mail-merge capabilities.

preview with zoom; this view is uneditable. CA-Textor is slow to reformat, and it reformats the entire document after each change.

CA-Textor does not provide footnoting or endnoting. You can have tabs left, right, centered, and decimal, but there are no tab leaders. Although the table editor is snazzy, it doesn't deliver spreadsheetlike facilities.

You can insert a number of graphic formats easily, but the program offers limited image editing features. Columns are possible, but there is no support for column balancing or uneven columns. In addition, CA-Textor lacks a macro language, frame capabilities, and special forms processing.

CA-Textor's spelling checker has a special feature for proofing text from optical character

las. comparisons, and logical operations. You can construct complex mail-merge tasks using data files from dBase or other common formats. The program also supports limited Dynamic Data Exchange linking as a client only with a limitation on 500 characters for the import.

In short, CA-Textor offers competent editing, some useful features, and superior field functions for complex mail-merge capabilities.

The program is best suited for office environments with simple documents that make extensive use of data files for mail merge when complex selection, calculation, and formatting of results are required.

CA-Textor is \$225. Computer Associates, 1 Computer Associates Plaza, Islandia, NY 11788; (800) 225-5224.