WordStar for Windows excels at frame-based tasks

Word processor is less suited to complex editing, long documents

BY JOHN LOMBARDI

WordStar's flagship Windows word processor offers a few improvements and improved performance in its recent upgrade to Version 1.5. WordStar for Windows now supports Object Linking and Embedding capabilities, enhanced graphic import facilities, and support for Windows 1.1 features, including TrueType. WordStar for Windows remains an effective frame-based product that is quite capable for documents that require extensive formatting, but the package still lacks many of the features available for the latest programs such as Lotus Ami Pro or Microsoft Word for Windows. This review is based on criteria that we established in our last comparison of Windows professional word processors. (See February 10, page 76.)

PERFORMANCE:

Basic editing: As an editing tool, WordStar for Windows performs well, though there have been no significant improvements over Version 1.0. You can handle most editing needs with WordStar's solid features list. There are general search-and-replace tools and nontabifiable tabs with left, right, center, and decimal options, and tab leader characters. You have the ability to center or justify paragraphs, and there is an optional automatic or manual hyphenation. You can remove automatic hyphens by finding and replacing the hyphen tags. WordStar's search and replace tool will find items in frames (except for graphic and table frames), and it will find formatting done with tags.

Formatting can be done in two ways — through either tags or styles. Tags format specific sections of text by tagging them on or off attributes such as character size, font, and alignment. Tag formatting takes precedence over the formatting included in a style.

WordStar for Windows still lacks an aware cut and paste command, and an automatic case change command. You can reuse cases through paragraph and keychain combination. The editing tools do not include the capability to enter fields for file sizes, date, time, and other information. The enabling capabilities are not as intuitive as those in Ami Pro and Word for Windows, but once you learn how to manipulate around the package, you can edit with relative ease.

We rate basic editing 80.

Proofreading: WordStar for Windows 1.5 includes a spelling checker, a thesaurus, and a grammar checker that is an add-on of Correct Grammar for Windows 2.0 — the latest version. You can choose to install Correct Grammar so that it appears in one of WordStar's pull-down menus or in Windows Program Manager's File menu so you can use Correct Grammar with all of your other Windows applications via the clipboard.

The spelling checker works fine, offering parts of speech and definitions. The thesaurus offers synonyms, near syn, antonyms, near antonyms, and see also references. You can start and stop a spelling check anywhere in your document, but you cannot back up and resume checking, or you can correct a defined block of text. The spell checker permits one user dictionary at any one time. You cannot perform global replace with the spelling checker, but it does pick the most recent replacement first in the list of suggested alternatives.

Correct Grammar works as expected, although the program works best on documents that are less than 64 KB. If your document exceeds 64 KB, Correct Grammar recommends checking it in pieces, which can be tedious. We rate proofreading tools 90.

Legal: WordStar for Windows 1.5

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WordStar for Windows also has basic and floating graphics frames, supports simple line drawing and graphics, supports multiple overlapping graphics frames, supports graphics objects, adjusts their color and intensity, and selects a fill pattern. Graphics and text frame borders can have square or rounded corners with various line weights. Headers and footers exist as separate frames and you can create a new header or footer frame. WordStar also supports guide words that use text from a page as part of the header. The math features that WordStar lacks are an equation component and math facilities. We rate layout very good.

Mail merge: WordStar's mail merge capabilities remain unchanged from Version 1.0. The mail merge form for letters and mailing lists offers adequate facilities but lacks the sophistication of other products. Although merge will take files from other programs and has considerable flexibility with fields and record delimiters, WordStar for Windows 1.5 won't handle any conditions for producing even minimally complex forms letters. The program has no help for setting up mailing labels. If you encounter a hard record with WordStar 1.1, you will get an error message and the merge will quit. You can't skip bad records and keep going. We rate mail merge satisfactory.

Style sheets: WordStar's style capabilities include all of the layout characteristics of a paragraph, including rules, margins, indent, font, character emphasis, and hyphenation. Styles exist independently of the document for application to paragraphs, and styles are not saved in the document. WordStar also uses formatting tags that can take precedence over a style. If formatting tags exist, you add one, the

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tag always supersedes the instructions in a style. WordStar has the capability to find and replace any of those tags as well as the styles themselves. We rate style sheets very good.

Font and color management. WordStar handles printers and fonts well. You can use any of the Hewlett-Packard fonts and PostScript scalable fonts. Although you cannot select extremely large and small sizes (4 points or 127 points, for example) from the user interface, you can enter those numbers manually. You can print your pages in reverse order. The program supports the Adobe Type Manager fonts and the Windows TrueType fonts, but it no longer ships with Biersman fonts. WordStar supports tables for leading, kerning, and tracking better spacing. You can easily include drop caps. WordStar's font and printer handling has improved with the addition of support for Windows 3.1 TrueType fonts. We rate font and printer support very good.

Reference notes: Although WordStar doesn't have full outline support, it does support numbering paragraphs and subheadings within the table of contents and endnotes. The program can number sets of line entries. Footnotes normally appear at the bottom of the page, but you can enable footnote links within a document, which makes it easier to follow footnotes at the end of a storyline. When using this option, you can see the footnotes except for draft. In the margin of the text, between footnote tags, WordStar supports footnotes containing references in the notes and the index, and you can customize the footnote format. WordStar will index entries, but you cannot sort other text or data in the program. Indexes and tables of contents exist as files stored separately from the program that must be printed separately or imported into the document for final formatting. WordStar's capabilities include up to 15 separate lists that are limited to entries of no more than 150 bytes, including tags. We rate reference tools very good.

Import and export: With WordStar 1.5, you can import documents from an unlimited number of formats. WordStar can also import and export files with a variety of word processors. WordStar has two forms of importing: One is a document that can be imported as a basic style, but it can be converted and given a sequentially numbered name, the other form imports text without styles.

Import and export formats also include a large series of graphics formats that match and exceed almost any other program we've tested. We did find that EPS files without information about the front of the file format and will not load. WordStar for Windows 1.5 will keep this EPS file open and when necessary, you must change the graphics format and restart it to be able to access the EPS file again. We tested an EPS graphics file from the previous version of the program for our benchmarks.

A comprehensive README.ME file describes a variety of difficulties likely to be encountered in the import or export of the various file types in which features have been retained. The external format has been completely rewritten in WordStar. We rate import and export very good.

WordStar for Windows has little support for network operations. You can open an already open file or a ready-made file, but you cannot edit open or make changes to the file under a different name. There is no license control, though WordStar will print well into network queues. There have been no changes from Version 1.0. We rate network capabilities poor.

Speed: For our single-document WordStar 1.5 is about the same speed, but a little slower, than WordStar version 1.3. However, for complex documents times are much slower than those of WordStar version 1.3. However, it is a step performer. We rate speed satisfactory.

Macros: WordStar for Windows 1.5 has no macro capabilities at all. We rate macros unacceptable.

DOCUMENTATION:
WordStar has combined its two smaller manuals from Windows version 1.0 into a single large user's guide. This manual is moderately printed and contains a fine index. The package also includes an extensive quick reference book that was included with the previous version, and there is a booklet from Correct Grammar explaining that add-in program. WordStar contains the usual Windows-compliant on-line help, and the on-line tutorial has been improved in this version. The error messages are generally helpful. We rate documentation very good.

EASE OF LEARNING:
WordStar, Version 1.5 is relatively easy to learn. We found the frame-based system effective and intuitive and the application and management of styles easy as well. There is simple on-line documentation and a capability to transfer key strokes from WordStar for DOS or Wordstar 2000, which cases learning. The on-line tutorial is also a very useful support tool for new users. We rate ease of learning very good.

EASE OF USE:
A combination of customizable toolbars, multiple keyboard accelerators, alternative keyboards for WordStar for DOS and Wordstar 2000 users, and other enhancements make Version 1.5 quite easy for experienced users. You can modify the view, zoom, print, and other settings. There are guidelines, and the screen will show pacing pages in an editable format. You can assign a series of line and display keys to use alone or with shift or other controls.

However, the absence of macros, the inability to customize the keyboard accelerators, and the limitation of showing only one document at a time reduces WordStar for Windows effectiveness. The 64K file size limit on Correct Grammar inhibits effective use of this product for major writing projects. We rate ease of use good.

SUPPORT:
Support policies: WordStar offers telephone, but not toll-free, technical support from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, Pacific time, but support dates for 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. In addition, WordStar offers BBS support via CompuServe and fax support. Support policies are good.

Technical support: Our calls to WordStar produced clear, informed answers with only a short waiting time on hold. We rate technical support very good.

VALUE:
As an introduction to WordStar for Windows, a discounting its normal $349 price to $149 until the end of the year. You can upgrade from WordStar for Windows, Version 1.0 for $29.55. Version 1.5 has fewer features and capabilities than other programs that came at $495 but more than most programs listed in the $120 range. At a price of $995, we rate WordStar for Windows as a good value.

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