PRODUCT REVIEWS

WordPerfect 6.1 battles for best of breed

By John Lombardi

For Novell Inc., the second time's the charm. Version 6.0 of its flagship WordPerfect word processing software staked a distant third place in our last comparison of Windows word processors. (See Feb. 7, 1994, page 66.) The upgraded WordPerfect 6.1, now part of Novell's Perfect-Office suite, fixed the crippling bugs that stuck up the performance of the previous edition and adds enough features to raise its score to almost match that of its archival, Microsoft Word for Windows 6.0.

This intense battle for first place reminds us of the early days of word processing and software, when upstart WordPerfect challenged then-leder WordStar for market dominance. The end result of these battles, both past and present, is better software for end-users.

People with general word processing needs will be satisfied with either product. Both programs offer a strong set of features and are easy to use. Both can handle just about any imaginable word processing task. What distinguishes each is the features it emphasizes, the style of its interface, and its integration with other productivity programs.

FEATURES

After running our full test suite on Version 6.1, we found substantial positive changes in only a few areas and no new bugs. These positive changes caused us to revise our scoring in six performance categories. Fortunately for Novell, those six categories include ones that Version 6.0 had the most trouble with. Novell also made minor improvements throughout this release in the cosmetic appearance and consistency of the user interface, the packaging and contents of the online help and the hard-copy documentation, and the operation of various features. Although we approached these enhancements, they weren't significant enough to alter our scoring in the affected category. The scores for the following categories remain the same as those in our Feb. 7, 1994, comparison: mail merge, very good; long documents, satisfactory; full-screen editing; very good; workgroup and networking; very good; macros; general; documentation; excellent; support policies; very good; and technical support. (For a full description of our test suite, see How We Tested, Feb. 7, 1994, page 1, and the test card.)

PERFORMANCE

Basic editing and formatting

We evaluated basic editing and formatting by performing common editing tasks such as search and replace, drag and drop, cut and paste. WordPerfect 6.1 earned slightly higher scores than Version 6.0 due to new editing features. We were able to drag and drop a selection not only within an open document but also between different documents open on-screen and between most Windows-compatible applications. This brings WordPerfect's drag-and-drop capabilities up to the market standard.

WordPerfect added a Make It Fit Expert for those people who have to fit a particular amount of page real estate. Make It Fit takes your text and comes into as many pages as you specify. For example, if you have 10 pages of text and only eight sheets of paper, the Make It Fit expert displays the type face and adjusts the margins until your document squashes onto those eight pages. WordPerfect has a limit of 50 percent shrinkage or expansion, the equivalent Word for Windows feature can only change the document one page. Our scoring shows that WordPerfect's Make It Fit Expert generally works well. However, complex documents with aligned text or graphics images can end up with layout problems — the Make It Fit expert may move text outside the margins.

Another feature that WordPerfect has but Word for Windows doesn't is the capability to search for word stems. For example, you can search for "go" and the function highlights all instances of "go", "going", and "gone" in your document. We liked this feature and found it useful, the sort of people who generally conjugate their verbs. On the other hand, WordPerfect does not have the equivalent of Word for Windows' search-while-sanity option, so it's a deal-killer.

WordPerfect also made a slew of ease-of-use enhancements. It improved the word processor's OLE implementation: WordPerfect 6.1 is an OLE client. For example, we were able to use OLE when both the server and client documents were open.

It's easy to insert special, foreign-language, or graphical characters in the text, and buttons require only a single click to insert. On the downside, our test that moved tabbed columns from one place to another continues to suffer from the clumsiness of WordPerfect's special in-stream code editor. Although the program does a good job of automatically listing its code within the text stream, we still raged unanticipated results if we deleted columns with one set of tabs and moved those columns to a location that had different tab settings. We had to use the Recall function to insert missing columns and move tabbed columns to a location that had different tab settings. We had to use the Recall function to insert missing columns and move tabbed columns to a location that had different tab settings.
PRODUCT REVIEWS

Codes screen to show the location of the tab
By removing unnecessary elements, WordPerfect 6.1 still has room for im-
proved spelling and grammar checking. The integrated grammar checker is significantly better. In versions of
earlier versions, we liked Grammarit better than Word for Windows 6.0's grammar checker, but we didn't experience any extra
benefit from its existence. This version, however, made its presence known with

The product is vastly improved in the area of layout. With
WordPerfect 6.0 we could not complete our layout task, but we have only praise for WordPerfect
6.1's layout capabilities.

Sophisticated functionality that makes it much better than its previous iterations. For example, Grammarit now lets us display partials of speech and parse sentences so we can produce practically perfect prose.

We found that the spelling checker in the previous version would not accept an accented character in the spell-check window unless we used the Alt-hyperlink method. Version 6.1 provides a graphical method for handling accented characters but it has some pitfalls. The new method pops up the insert WordPerfect Character box while spell-checking. However, our tests proved that when the Insert Characters box is brought up after the spelling checker is launched, the inserted character ends up in the text at the point of the cursor, not in the spell-check window. Going through the protest a second time

WordPerfect 6.1
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(603) 431-7371 or (317) 225-5000

This is the product that Version 6.0 was meant to be. Word from the bugs, and made a host of bugs.

New console displays, replace options, small bugs in the spelling checker, and improved error messages of other word processing. New, Novell Console feature requires a new tool that's not included with���������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������������行 않는 경례의

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