Office Word Processing: The Current Crop

BY JOHN LOMBARDI, REVIEW BOARD

n the fierce battle for word processing supremacy, corporate America represents the most significant battlefield. By capturing corporate steno pools and office word processing, manufacturers of the heaviest, duty word processing packages hope to gain a large, captive market. Once an organization commits itself to a word processing package requiring a major investment in training, it remains hooked for subsequent up-grades and available for add-on pro-

Because this market is so competitive, poorly designed packages have long been washed from the lists. The programs we look at here do what they say they will do reasonably quickly and quite competently. Most have more features than any reasonable person or office will ever need, although specialized functions can be a major issue for some organizations. And in fact these specialized functions may be the most important buying criteria for word processing systems.

Of the seven major word processing systems selected for this survey, four originated as microcomputer imitations originated as microcomputer imitations of dedicated word processing systems characteristic of business offices five years or so ago. Displaywrite 4 mimics a now-defunct IBM system, Multimate Advantage II and Officewriter 5 mimic a dedicated Wang system; and Samna Word IV echoes a Lanier word processor.

Like their ancestors, these page-ori-ented products edit and display text in terms of pages. Although they initially gained their acceptance as microcomputer copies of dedicated systems, all four have evolved to include many more features and capabilities and can now compete directly with the best programs

Two systems — Wordstar 2000 and Word Perfect 4.2 — exemplify the document-oriented approach. This approach treats text as a continuous flow of words, with page breaks shown on-screen but not affecting operation. Of varying power and sophistication, these two systems show their text editing heritage in ease of text cony and revision.

What are the attributes of each? Pageoriented processor; are very fast when moving to any page whose number you have, including the end of the document; they are not particularly fast when scrolling through the document because they have to continually refrieve and save. Document-oriented processors of-

fer a more seamless approach of dealing with text. Consequently, using a dictio-nary, thesaurus, or any like function across page boundaries is much more graceful. (By graceful, we mean that achieving the desired effect requires a minimum of keystrokes, and that the structure of the word processor is unobtrusive so moving from mode to mode occurs smoothly.)

Microsoft Word 3.11 is something of an anomaly, coming to office word processing from a typesetting back-ground. While mostly document-oriented, it places special emphasis on the elements of the printed page and offers an unusually powerful range of format-

ting and layout capabilities.
Whatever their origins, the programs share a common core of word processing capabilities. They handle text with reasonable speed and efficiency, move the cursor around, cut and paste text; check spelling, handle mailing labels and form letters, and perform math functions.

With the exception of Displaywrite 4... all have extensive printer support and facilities to customize that support for special uses or unusual printers. Again. with the exception of Displaywrite 4, all can convert word processing files from one variety of word processor to another, as well as produce standard ASCII files without any word processing codes. All

can convert to and from the IBM standard RFT (revised form text) word processing format. Each has a large, well produced manual, extensive on-line help, and keyboard templates to help learn and use the program's commands.

Most of these programs have received full reviews in InfoWorld. The summary that follows offers a quick guide to the major strengths and weaknesses of each.

Displaywrite 4
IBM's heavyweight falls in the group derived from dedicated word processing systems. Version 4 of this product is now powerful, ponderous, and effective. And despite the program's new use of pulldown menus, it's still not a graceful product, requiring users to conform to its own, somewhat quirky use of editing keys. Moreover, the program's speller is only competent — it will not reversewrap the cursor from a subsequent line to a previous line with the arrow keys and control codes can only be deleted with the Del key, not the backspace.

IBM's printer support is among the worst in the business. This product supports only IBM-brand printers, although it is possible for experts to prepare printer drivers for other products. IBM provides no support to individual users at all, presumably expecting dealers or corporate support staffs to handle these issues.

Displaywrite 4 can do a good job of managing complicated document assembly tasks or mailing list operations. Its facilities for these purposes are comparable to those of Multimate or Officewriter. But even the improvements in Displaywrite 4 do not make it competitive with the other page-oriented word systems considered here.

We can only recommend this product for offices with a major commitment to IBM hardware and software, a strong support staff, and a large pool of workers already familiar with IBM word process-ing products. Displaywrité 4 is not competitive in power, ease of use, or ease of learning, with Multimate, Officewriter, or Samna, among the pageoriented systems. (For a full review of Displaywrite 4, see InfoWorld, March 9.

Displaywrite 4, \$495. IBM Corp. P.O. Box 152560. Irving, TX 75015 (800) 447-4700.

Microsoft Word 3.11

Among the high-power word processing systems included in this comparison,

Selecting Office Word Processors

he programs included in this summary are big and relatively difficult to learn thoroughly, although they differ significantly in ease of first use. Their many features, options, and capabilities provide the user with such capabilities provide the user with such a great variety of possibilities that keeping track of what is possible and what works best is a major responsibil-ity. These packages will be most successfully used in offices that can afford to have a word processing expert whose responsibilities include installation, customizing, instruction,

and maintenance of the program.

If properly installed for users who have received good training, the power and effectiveness of a major word processing system becomes an asset. If individual users have to learn the program, maintain it, and select which features to use for which tasks, they usually spend too much time exploring the program's complexity and often settle for knowledge of a minimal set of features.

Selecting a word processing package from this group is made more difficult by the fact that all of them are so good. An informed choice has three stages: first, identify your office's most complex, difficult, and lengthy word processing task — then eliminate those word processors that cannot do it. Second, look closely at the unique features of each word processing program and keep only those on

your list whose features serve a useful function for your organization. (This may be sophisticated card file management, complex typesetting needs, telecommunications support, or compatibility with a dedicated system or already trained workforce.) Third, choose among the remaining systems based on users' preferences. (Do they like page-oriented or document-ori-ented systems; do they like menus or commands; or do they prefer one help

system's approach over another's?)
While our preference for Word
Perfect 4.2 represents a balanced evaluation of the many features and capabilities of these seven programs, we can easily imagine office environ-ments for which Word Perfect would not be the best program. For example, an organization with a significant investment in Wang word processing technology would be well served by adopting either Multimate Advantage or Office Writer, thereby enhancing the value of training already acquired through the Wang system.

Finally, it's important to recognize that the sophistication of these programs requires significant computing power. None of these can be satisfac-torily run on a PC based on two floppy disks. They work well on IBM compatible machines with the standard 20-megabyte hard disk, but they are optimally effective on ATclass computers with fast hard drives.

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Although at one time some scholars expected area develop into autonomous academic departments with programs. Few actually did. The normal pattern F = 2. End ...

Factorized Factor

Functions and Resources

All area studies, whether domestic or international; exist to make something out of existing resources. The first rule of good area studies is to capture the interest and enthusiasm, the intellectual and creative energy of faculty in a wide range of academic departments who share a common interest in the geographic area or topic concerned. The wider the net cast the better the program

Feu area studies programs thrive, however, without two kinds of

IBM's Displaywrite 4 leatures a new pull-down menu to simplify the user interface. The page-priented program directly supports only IBM-brand printers.

Microsoft Word represents a significantly edifferent approach. Word's strengths are not in typing or editing, but in providing typesettinglike control of margins, gutters, text placement, text enhancements, spacing, and similar elements of the finished document's layout and appearance. And in fact Word's style sheets let users specify exactly how recurring documents (like forms) or long documents (like books) will look, with consistency across multiple users.

For Microsoft Word, the most important part of the document is its appearance on the printed page, not its resemblance to a typewritten document or its flow of edited content. Hence, to understand Microsoft Word and gain the benefit of its exemplary power, you must approach text with the vision of the typesetter. Of course, Word 3.11 has all the useful editing features of major word processing programs; it has excellent form letter and mailing list management; and it offers a complete set of commands for document assembly and other complex text management chores. Its speller and thesaurus perform very well indeed.

But when all is said and done, what distinguishes Microsoft Word from its competitors is its fine control over the appearance of the printed page and its capability to take advantage of virtually any screen or printer to deliver the most precise-representation of text the device can produce. Word works equally well with mouse or keyboard, with color or monochrome screens, with graphics or character displays, and with simple or expensive printers. Complex documents

can be constructed in Microsoft Word, and its good outlining feature helps enhance the completion of such tasks.

The price paid for this power and sophistication, is in learning time and expertise. Word is not a word processing program for amateurs. It requires considerable attention from the operator, and while its tutorial, help screens, and manuals are excellent, the program is surely among the most difficult to use effectively. In addition, Word is less effective in handling office tasks than some of the more traditional office word processors. For example, it won't deal with page breaks at all until the operator tells it to do so. And setting the page formats can be complicated. However, in offices with strong technical support, standardized style sheets could be built to handle most of the details, allowing operators to produce documents quickly and effectively. Word's printer support is superior and its capability to use multiple windows offers considerable convenience when several documents need to be edited or compared on-screen at the

We recommend Microsoft Word for offices where the precise control of printed appearance is essential, and where the production of complex documents printed on sophisticated printers constitutes a major portion of the work load. Other programs are more effective on standard office chores and much easier to use, learn, and support. (For a full review of Microsoft Word 3.0 for MS-DOS machines, see InfoWorld, June 2, 1986. Major differences include cur-

Into autonomous academic departments with their our doctoral programs, few actually did. The normal pattern for an area studies program in a large public university is to have an undergraduate whom or centificate, a Maste degree program, and a Ph.D. certificate. Many variations on this theme exist, but most Gwerican universition have resisted the departmentalization of area studies. Obviously, some lexceptions occur.

Functions and Resources

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Feu area studies programs thrive, however, without two kinds of resources: central resources and marginal resources.

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Page 5 O Hicrosoft Word, Version 3.11 is its fine control of the printed document

and its support of virtually any printer. Word works well with both mouse and keyboard.

rent support of a thesaurus, increased number of printer drivers, 3½-inch disks, and IBM PS/2 computers.)

Microsoft Word, Version 3.11 (including 5¹/₄- and 3¹/₅-inch disks), \$450 for single-user version. Microsoft Corp., 16011 N.E. 36th Way, P.O. Box 97017, Redmond, WA 98073; (800) 426-9400, (206) 882-8088 in WA and AK.

Multimate Advantage II

This powerful package includes most features expected of a major office product. While maintaining the same keystroke commands that mimic the old Wang system, Multimate Advantage II has added pull-down menus and an improved help system that facilitate both learning and use. Multimate now has the more convenient insert method that simply pushes the old text ahead of the inserted text, reformatting the paragraph as it goes along. In addition, the program still permits the old drop-down insert mode: Hitting Insert clears the screen, putting the next line of text at the bottom of the screen. Hitting Insert again closes the gap. Multimate also has a document mode that lets users ignore page boundaries and automatically places page breaks. The original page-oriented operation remains available.

Its greatest strength is in list processing, or the combining of elements from a list into a standard letter or form. Multimate has both a template form for entering lists and a card-file system that permits interesting and elaborate arrangements of data that you typically find on a 3+by-5-inch card. Multimate's

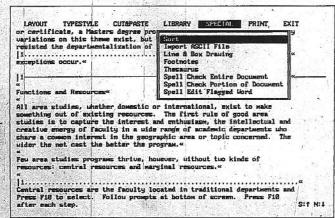
math, newspaper columns, side-by-side columns, footnotes, and outline numbering features are also strong. While some other programs have more features, such as line numbering, graphics capabilities, and telecommunication modules, Multimate Advantage has the essentials. The only significant feature missing is indexing.

Multimate Advantage II is a much improved product over its predecessors. Even so, it can only handle documents up to 128K, or about 40 to 50 singlespace pages. In some professional offices where the work consists of correspondence and short reports, this limit may not matter, but in businesses that routinely turn out lengthy reports and other documents of considerable size, the 128K limit is a real annoyance. The product is also slow at many functions. The documentation for this product is well-done, extensive, and packaged in seven different booklets. In short, Multimate Advantage II is a competitor in this class. While not as fast as some word processing packages, Multimate Advantage works fast enough on ATcalibre machines. (See full review, page 55 of this issue.)

Multimate Advantage II (no version number), \$565 with 5¼-inch disks, \$595 with 3½-inch disks as well. Ashton-Tate Corp., 20101 Hamilton Ave., Torrance, CA 90502; (213) 329-8000.

Officewriter 5

Officewriter and Multimate have been locked in competition for the title of most effective Wang imitator for a



Multimate Advantage II now has a convenient pull-down menu in addition to its traditional Wanglike interface. It also provides both document- and page-oriented operation.

For area studies programs through houseurs, without two kinds of resources: central resources and swarginal resources.

Solical resources are the faculty located in traditional departments and schools, engaged in teaching, research, and public service who hold tenure track appointments in the university. These resources: in addition include the basic library collections that support these faculty and their teaching and research in the area. Without a resources complement of central resources to area studies program can

Special Edit Functions

Press the Desired Function Key:

Fi - Spell Check a Word
F7 - Spell Check the Document
F8 - Quick Print
F9 - Automatic Pagination
F9 - Number Sections or Outline
F9 - Return to Edit

Like the other page-oriented products, Officewriter, Version 5.0 now offers automatic pagination. The program uses a Wanglike menu system that offers special features.

The screen display of Samna Word IV shows the entire text area, including left and right margins. The program has particularly strong forms-management capabilities.

number of years. Each program has its advantages. Officewriter is somewhat easier to use than Multimate but is not as powerful. It offers fewer features and is not as capable at handling very complex forms, document assembly, or mailing

Although originally page-oriented, Officewriter 5, like its competitor Multimate, now has automatic pagination and handles insertions and deletions as easily as most document-oriented systems. Very fast in editing, Officewriter 5 can hold a document of up to 400 pages, considerably larger than Multimate's 128K. Officewriter also has an add-on program that will integrate graphics into text, although it does not have a data file management program such as the one available with Multimate Advantage II.

Officewriter's Wanglike menu system is less effective than Multimate's pulldown menus; and its document management facilities for assembly, list processing, and similarly complex tasks are less powerful. But for offices with less technical support and relatively standard correspondence, report writing, and mailing-list management requirements, Officewriter 5.0 is a good choice. Its spelling checker and thesaurus are excellent; its ease of learning and use are quite good; and it supports a substantial number of printers. (Officewriter 5 was reviewed-in full in *InfoWorld*'s January 26, 1987, issue.)

Officewriter 5.0, \$495. Office Solutions Inc., 2802 Coho St., Madison WI 537.13; (800) 228-0747, (608) 274-5047

Samna Word IV

This significant upgrade of Samna III has produced a substantial product that compares favorably with the top pageoriented word processors, such as Multi-mate Advantage II, Displaywrite 4, or Officewriter 5. Derived from the dedicated word processing tradition, Samna places heavy emphasis on specialized control keys and a somewhat more rigorous page orientation than Multimate or Officewriter. Its screen display shows the entire page, including the text area and left and right margins.

While quick and effective in editing, Samna has fewer cursor and editing commands than its competitors. It also handles pagination less effectively. When you've changed the number of lines on a page, either by inserting or deleting text, Samna IV will not readjust the document automatically except at print time. Fortunately, the program has a preview feature that helps clarify breaks, but even this is no substitute for automatic pagination.

The great strength of this program, however, is its text management capabilities. It has some of the most complete facilities for handling forms, form letters, selective mailing list applications, and complex document assembly that we have seen. Samna also shows an impressive range of capabilities when sorting, selecting, and managing data files.

The program handles proportionally spaced text with style and offers a variety of features to indicate when changed fonts in proportionally spaced text may produce unexpectedly long lines. AlWordPerfect 4.2 Template (IBM Layout)

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Footnote PRINT Math/Columns Exit	Print LINE FORMAT Page Format Underline	F8
Merge/Sort MERGE E Merge Codes Merge R	Macro Def. RETRIEUE TEXT Macro Saus Text	F10

Word Perfect, Version 4.2 will display on-screen a template describing the various control keys associated with specific functions, including macro generation.

though its speller is no more than adequate, Samna Word IV supports dictionary hyphenation.

Samna is acceptably quick, although its search function is slower than its competitors. While Samna Word IV can handle newspaper columns at print time, it cannot show them on-screen while editing. Its documentation is thin on examples, although a detailed table of contents helps. The on-line help is no more than adequate and less effective than that in competing products such as

Samna IV is a product appropriate for institutional environments with strong support and training staffs. It is particularly well-suited for offices with heavy forms management and list- or mailprocessing tasks.

Samna Word IV, \$550. Samna Corp., 2700 N.E. Expressway, Suite C-700, Atlanta, GA 30345; (800) 831-9679.

Word Perfect 4.2

Word Perfect's market share continues to be high among word processors, principally because of two related characteristics: First, it is the easiest of the heavyweights to learn and use, and second, it offers more features than any competing product. While some tasks can be done better with one or another of the other products reviewed here, no

other program can match the comprehensiveness of Word Perfect:

Ctrl + Function Key SHIFT + FUNCTION KEY Alt + Function Key

Function Key alone

This program has a fine help system and quick and effective editing with an abundance of editing commands to fit most preferences. It can handle two documents at once, although not two windows on the same document. Its formatting and printing capabilities equal all but Microsoft Word's, although its method of handling proportionally spaced text is less effective than Multimate or Microsoft Word, which use inch measurements for line length rather than Word Perfect's number of characters.

Its speller and thesaurus are among the best in the business, and its printer support is outstandingly complete and totally customizable. Because the program is so easy to learn and use, it does not require the level of technical support that would characterize a Displaywrite 4 or Microsoft Word office. Although of Worldsom World office. Although lacking the telecommunications module of Wordstar 2000, Word Perfect's index-ing, footnoting, table of contents genera-tion, and table of authorities (a specialized form of footnoting used by lawyers) capability provide a remarkably power-

Word Perfect's greatest strength, of course, is its remarkable flexibility. Almost infinitely malleable, the program serves the needs of secretaries, mailing-

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Document-oriented Wordstor 2000 Plus features o mnemonic interface. The product represents a collection of individual programs linked together, including communications.

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list managers, scholars, editors, report writers, and casual memo writers equally well. While some programs force the user to sometimes exit one mode to access another, Word Perfect's lean user interface lets people do everything from the main screen. That's the beauty of this program. It allows the novice and expert be equally at home and effective within the same system, making the exchange of documents and tasks among a wide range of staff simple and effective.

(Word Perfect 4.2 received a full review in our February 2, 1987, issue.) Word Perfect 4.2, \$495. Word Perfect

Corp., 288 West Center St., Orem, Utah 84057; (800) 321-5906, or (801) 225-5000 in Utah.

Wordstar 2000 Plus

Wordstar 2000 Plus - which differs

from Wordstar Professional in its use of windows and a mnemonic interface a document-oriented system that sees text as a continuous flow of words. sentences, and paragraphs - and provides simple on-screen indications of page breaks. The program has almost commands are even more effective and complete than Multimate's or Word Perfect's, and its formatting power for headers, footers, page placement, footnotes, and similar items are as complete as any competitor's. In addition, Wordstar 2000 Plus has a superior mailmerge, list-processing, and document-assembly mode that will produce form letters and documents compiled from multiple files.

The Plus version of Wordstar 2000 includes additional modules that provide

telecommunications, an index generator, a large and effective thesaurus, and a mailing-list manager. In its Plus form, the package is competitive with anything available anywhere, and when run on an AT-class machine, it offers competitive speed of operation, especially for such a large collection of features.

Wordstar 2000 Plus has a complete documentation and tutorial system. It also has one of the best descriptions of how to use the HP Laserjet printer we have seen. The printer support for this program is prodigious, equalling any-thing available ready-made from other

systems.

Wordstar 2000 Plus can do about as much as any other system in this group, although some of its operations are less graceful because it is essentially a collec-tion of individual programs linked together. For example, creating an index or a table of contents requires the invocation of an essentially separate utility program. It does a good job of making the index, table of contents, and lists of indexes and appendixes, but it creates at least three additional files at the same time, more than doubling the amount of disk space required for the document. Moreover, any change to the text re-quires that you rerun the indexing utility before you can print. The mail list manager is of the fixed-field variety, but for its purpose of handling simple mailing chores, it is more than adequate. More complex list management tasks can be dealt with by using an external database. Math capabilities are extensive and easy to use. And while the program accommodates up to three newspaperstyle columns, they cannot be displayed on-screen while editing. Wordstar 2000 will permit three on-screen windows at a time. You can view another part of the same document in another window, but the changes made in one window do not appear in the other and will not be saved with the file in the second window.

In short, Wordstar 2000 Plus has good help, good menus, and is relatively easy to learn and use. The package is a collection of individual programs linked together so that moving from function to function can be less than smooth. Still, it should serve an office with long documents especially well, and its extensive mail-merge facilities make it suitable for complex list processing, form letters, and document assembly. (Wordstar 2000, Release 2 was reviewed in InfoWorld, April 7, 1986.)

Wordstar 2000 Plus, Release 2, \$495. Micropro International Corp., 33 San Pablo Ave., San Rafael, CA 94903; (800) 227-5609 or (415) 499-7676:

• EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

t's important to note that all these programs do word processing well but have different ways of implementing different features. t's important to note that all these, These features may represent only 10 percent of the product, but that difference may be critical. Word Perfect and Samna, for example, offer many features particularly attractive to law offices. In addition, Samna's strong forms capability makes it well-suited for insur-

ance companies. Multimate Advantage II offers excellent list-processing capabilities and a Wanglike interface that will be attractive to offices familiar with the Wang dedicated system. Samna Word IV provides strong document assembly capabilities along with its forms-processing features. Wordstar 2000 has a good menu system that should be easier to use for people not already familiar with Wordstar 3.3. Officewriter should prove adequate for offices with fairly standard correspondence and mailing-list require-ments. Microsoft Word 3.11 cannot be beaten for outstanding control of the printed document. We can recommend Displaywrite 4 only to those companies that have a strong commitment to IBM.

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But to us, Word Perfect 4.2 reniains the program to beat. It's fast, and its unobtrusive menu structure means that you don't have to be experienced to use it, But expert users, too, will find Word Perfect remarkably effective.



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