

Samna Word IV

Word Processor Has Powerful Document Handling Features

By John Lombardi, Review Board

In the rough-and-tumble office word processing market, the leading programs — including Word Perfect, Multimate, Displaywrite, Samna, and Officewriter — are constantly being improved so that none falls behind the others.

Not to be left behind is Samna Word IV. Thanks to added and improved features, it remains among the top contenders.

FEATURES:

Samna is basically a page-oriented word processing system, which means that the program pays more attention to pages than to other elements of text. However, the difference between page- and document-oriented systems has decreased substantially, with most page-oriented word processors adopting many features of the document systems. The key distinction for Samna involves inserting and determining page breaks.

In addition to a full set of editing commands and the usual set of capabilities to boldface, underline, center, and justify text, Samna has a number of powerful document management features. The program will handle glossaries of standard phrases, paragraphs, or pages. You can insert this boilerplate text into mostly repetitive documents, such as those found in insurance companies and law offices. Samna also has full mail-merge capabilities, including selection criteria, for form letters and mailing labels. And Samna has a special feature for working with preprinted forms.

Samna can sort and do math. You can also program special keys to duplicate a sequence of keystrokes or repeat a word or phrase. It will move, cut, paste, do columns, and print on a wide range of printers. However, there is no thesaurus. Samna does handle headers and footers as well as footnotes, outlining, and line numbering.

The features list for programs as complex as these goes on and on; we've included just the most important ones.

As we were going to press, we learned that Samna was preparing to ship Version 1.1 of Samna Word IV. The update will support TIFF graphic files and Postscript, offer improved forms management and sorting, include a revamped on-line tutorial, and provide faster printing of files on laser printers.

PERFORMANCE:

As you can see from the accompanying benchmark table, Samna is about as fast as the competition at some tasks, including loading a file and scrolling through a file. However, on other tests — such as importing our ASCII test file, reformatting margins, and doing a search-and-replace — it is much slower.

Samna IV edits well in type-over mode but is less effective in insert mode. In this mode, you can type in anything you like and use the backspace key to delete and the arrow keys to move around. But most of the editing commands available in the regular type-over mode are disabled in insert mode.

Samna handles much of its work visibly on-screen. For example, when you mark a sentence or paragraph, the cursor runs quickly over each character to highlight the marked area, which can be time-consuming. And if you cancel the process, the cursor runs backward to the beginning to unhighlight the block. If you want to reformat a complete file, you must also highlight it. If the file has more than one format, or if it has headers, footers, or footnotes, the cursor will move through the file line by line as Samna highlights it.

The system for adjusting page lengths is inferior to that of competitors such as Multimate II. Samna IV will paginate correctly when you're first entering text. But after you've edited some text, page breaks remain where they were, even if you've added or subtracted lines. To make the page breaks correct, you must repage on-screen, a tedious process, or repage automatically at print time.

Samna does have a zoom feature that shows the relationship of the text, footers, headers, and footnotes on a page. You can't read the text while using the zoom feature, but it does show exactly how the page will look when printed. Note, though, that zoom works only with graphics display cards.

Samna has two types of columns — independent (or non-snaking) and newspaper-style (snaking) columns. With the independent columns, text doesn't flow from one column to another, but you can see more than one column on-screen at once. With the newspaper-style columns, text flows from column to column, but if you want to see more than one column on-screen, you must use the zoom.

With the independent columns, you can mix pages with columns. Unfortunately, you don't have this option with

newspaper columns, a significant disadvantage. Competing programs such as Word Perfect and Microsoft Word let you mix newspaper columns with other areas of regular text in a file.

Further, Samna prints newspaper columns by first printing column one and then reverse-spacing the paper to the top of the form and printing the second column. This works with pin-fed paper and with printers that can do a reverse line feed, but it is much less effective with single-sheet paper and is impossible with printers that do not reverse line feed.

Samna IV has a flexible and comprehensive forms management feature that uses the word processor to store and print data on preprinted forms. Samna supplies a transparent plastic grid to permit an accurate description of your preprinted form; you then enter the

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InfoWorld Benchmark Test Results for Office Word Processors

Test	Displaywrite 4	Multimate Advantage II	Officewriter 5	Samna Word IV	Word 3.11	Word Perfect 6.2	Wordstar 2000 Plus
Load Document	10	1	2	2	Immed.	2	2
Save/Continue	9	Immed.	1	Varies	Varies	9	4
Save/Exit	2	Immed.	2	Varies	Varies	7	5
ASCII Import	18	31	12	2:04	Immed.	11	18
ASCII Export	50	1:24	26	39	4	23	4:18
DCA Translate	11	1:18	20	1:25	50	39	1:22
Cursor Top/Bottom	Immed.	Immed.	Immed.	Immed.	Immed.	7	18*
Manual Scroll	2:45	8:29	2:42	2:25	2:43*	2:27	4:10
Word Search	59	22	8	1:29	Immed.	Immed.	Immed.
Repage 20 Pages	30	1:25	25	41	14*	Auto.	Auto.
Displaywrite Scroll	7	23	5	1:13	10	8	12*
Search/Replace	1:31	24	1:00	2:49	4	20	1:11
Append Document	31	77	Immed.	2:08	Immed.	13	51
File Size	120K	100K	89K	122K	88K	86K	86K
RAM Required	33	31	31	29	29	30	31

System Configuration: IBM PC AT with 640K 1.5MB expanded memory. Times in minutes and seconds.
*Top of last page of document.
*Half of five new tests approximately twice as long as remaining three tests.
*Times in character mode. Manual scroll in graphics mode: 3 min., 50 sec. Repage in graphics mode: 15 sec.
*Insufficient memory to search and replace all files.
*Append file was 24K. All other append files were exact size of original document tested.

coordinates for the form's different fields into a series of screens.

We briefly mentioned Samna's glossary function, which lets you store and retrieve often-used text. Glossaries are essential for business purposes where much text is common to all responses.

There is also a four-function calculator that can do math in an on-screen register or operate on columns and rows. This feature works well and is more effective than the similar function in Word Perfect. It includes percent calculations and the capability to maintain two memory registers in addition to the total register.

The Sort function lets you sort lines or paragraphs. However, you must separate sort fields by tabs, and the area to be sorted must not cross a format-change line. Nonetheless, sorting is quick and effective.

The Samna IV speller is good, with a dictionary of some 80,000 words and the capability to do automatic dictionary hyphenation. The speller works quickly and easily, offering suggestions for unidentifiable words. You can accept the word, add it to the dictionary, replace it with a suggested spelling, edit it, or skip it. Although the speller has a word-count feature, you cannot get a word count without spell-checking

the entire document.

In this survey of performance, we have spent much more time on Samna's limitations — including the slow reformatting and the awkward handling of newspaper columns — than strengths. However, this program is a strong performer in most areas, including its forms management, glossary, zoom, and math features. We rate its performance very good, placing it in about the same league as

Multimate and somewhat below Word Perfect.

DOCUMENTATION:

Samna IV's documentation consists of a useful introductory booklet, an on-line tutorial, a loose-leaf three-ring binder, and disk-based documentation about printers. The on-line tutorial provides a useful introduction to Samna's capabilities. In the reference manual, each entry has a description, a step-by-

step set of instructions, and comments outlining limitations and alternatives.

The disk-based printer information is also comprehensive, although we prefer printed documentation, especially given the complexity of the subject. We also prefer more examples in the documentation.

The on-line help consists of two levels if you have a floppy-based system and three levels for those with hard drive systems.

The first level is a menu of choices; the second has a two- to four-line description of what the function does. The third level gives more detailed information. Still, the on-line help is not as thorough as that in Word Perfect, Multimate, or Microsoft Word, and you will likely find yourself frequently referring to the manual.

With a very good manual but only fair on-line support, we rate Samna's documentation good.

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INFO WORLD THE WEEKLY

REPORT CARD

SOFTWARE: **SAMNA WORD IV**

6.9

Unacceptable	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of Use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Error Handling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

Samna Word IV is a good choice for offices with a heavy work load of forms, mass mailings, and proposals with repetitive text. Not copy-protected. Pros: Strong forms and mail-merge features; strong boilerplate capabilities; comprehensive sorting capabilities; good backup features. Cons: Clunky navigation; no integration with other software.

PRODUCT DETAILS

Requires: IBM PC or compatible; 1MB RAM; 10MB free hard disk space; DOS 2.0 or later.

EASE OF LEARNING:

No complex product of this kind is completely easy to learn. And Samna IV takes somewhat more learning than most, partly because it makes extensive use of named keys. For example, Samna takes your F1 key, calls it save and display, and refers to it exclusively by that name. Although this makes using different keyboards easier, it also complicates learning.

The cursor keys on the keypad have substantially different meanings from those normally associated with the IBM-style keypad. Once you learn these designations, they cause no particular problem, but they take some learning, even with the provision of keyboard templates.

The complex functions, such as forms, mail-merge, and sort, require careful reading of the manual to use well. Given the absence of full on-line help, new users will be forced to spend a lot of time consulting the index and the manual. However, the disk-based tutorial provides a useful introduction to Samna's capabilities.

Among the programs in its class, Samna IV earns a satisfactory rating in ease of learning.

EASE OF USE:

Once you've learned Samna, however, it is easy to use. The functions perform predictably, and dedicated keys and special designations for functions make access to various activities relatively easy. Some minor annoyances remain. The system will not store keystrokes, and the need to repage on-screen or at print time

is a true nuisance.

However, it can access directories and subdirectories, exit to DOS, and let you move quickly and easily within a file. It does not, however, support a mouse.

A data interchange feature lets you move data from DIF-compatible spreadsheets and databases into Samna record files for mail-merge or forms. Samna also will convert files to and from ASCII, IBM Document Content Architecture/Revisable Form Text, DCA/Final Form Text, and Navy DIF. Although Samna will read in Wordstar text, the formatting features of such files are lost.

On balance, Samna's ease of use is very good.

ERROR HANDLING:

Samna IV has a comprehensive system for protecting the user from errors. The program operates directly on the text stored on disk, and it has a backup procedure that creates two additional backup files when you begin an editing session and maintains a two-level backup at all times. You can also have the program perform periodic timed backups during your editing session.

Samna has an undo feature, which you invoke by repeating the last function key you used in combination with the shift key. This works well for such things as block deletes and cut and paste. It does not, however, let you recover from multiple single-character deletes.

The program is well-protected from simple-minded errors such as open disk drive doors. And if you follow reasonable backup procedures, the danger of lost text is practically eliminated.

Most keystroke errors related to command entry and execution are well-trapped, and an error message is issued. The manual includes a complete listing of possible error messages.

Given the multiple backup options, reasonable undo feature, and other error-handling capabilities, we rate Samna's error handling very good.

SUPPORT:

Samna IV is not copy-protected. Samna offers 30 days of free support. We called the support line (not toll-free), and the technician provided us with superb help. Although he didn't have all the answers, he found them and called us back within 20 minutes. For \$125, you can buy an extended support plan, which entitles you to 20 calls per year, as well as several publications.

The disk-based printer support is extensive, but we believe that printer support for word processors in this class should include user-modifiable printer tables with instructions.

Although we are not enamored of subscription help (since free support is available from competitors), nor of limited-time help, the high quality of the support provided earns this product a good rating for support.

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Word of Positive Review: so do not meet the State Board to take my job of education on my part. For the high quality word processing program we found throughout the state.

The Area Studies Issue:

Traditional academic program and discipline studies are often presented in a relatively unstructured fashion from institutions to institutions and programs to programs. Good universities, for example, have such the same organizations of their language departments, their history programs, or their business schools. Some studies, however, could vary significantly, and challenge the creative energies of any education team. To help the Board of Studies place its concepts in proper perspective, a short review of that an individual by the Law press studies may be helpful.

At its most elemental, some studies represent the combination of academic talents from many disciplines and schools focused on a

Samna Word IV lets you specify whether the page should break after a certain number of lines or only between paragraphs.

VALUE:

Priced at \$595, Samna Word IV costs the same as Multimate Advantage II. However, it is more expensive than other leading competitors, including Microsoft Word 3 (\$450) and a bevy of programs that list for \$495.

Within its class of high-powered office word processing programs, Samna IV has power, flexibility, performance, and features that put it just below the top of the class — Word Perfect. Slightly harder to use and missing a few useful features, Samna IV nevertheless has many advantages that put it about on par with Multimate Advantage II and higher than Officerwriter 5. We rate Samna a good value.

John Lombardi is a professor of history and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967.

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