

Professional Write 2.0

Word Processor Enhancements
Useful for General Office Tasks

By John Lombardi, Review Board

One of the more elegant executive word processors, Professional Write 2.0 offers enhancements that improve its power and effectiveness while maintaining its original ease of use.

FEATURES:

In this new version, Professional Write 2.0 adds several features to its basic word processing capabilities. Rectangular block definition allows the easy manipulation of tables and other similar text, and an effective calculator system permits manipulation of simple formulas, calculation of rows and columns, and the insertion of results anywhere in the text.

Professional Write continues to use a fixed "address book" format for mail merging, although it can import data files from other programs. The program also supports the inclusion of graphs from several popular programs such as Harvard Graphics. It imports and in some cases exports several types of word processing, spreadsheet, database, and graphics import files automatically.

Professional Write 2.0 includes facilities for making use of fonts and laser printers with a sophisticated installation and modification system. It easily allows multiple printer configurations, font at-

tachments, and screen displays.

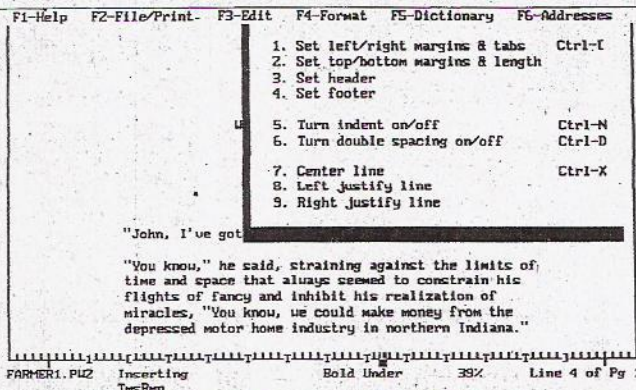
While the program lacks features found in the more advanced category of office and professional packages, such as footnotes, revision marking, text comments, indexing and table of contents, outlining, paragraph numbering, and similar refinements, its feature set is sufficiently rich for executive-level work, particularly for small offices and anyone who needs quick, efficient word processing at a basic level.

Our Executive Word Processors Report Card is based on the report card we used in our March 28 product comparison of office and professional word processors, with weightings adjusted.

PERFORMANCE:

Professional Write's major visual metaphor is the complete page — the program shows, on-screen, all margins (top, bottom, and sides). Consequently, you see how text fits on the page, but you also waste screen space to show margins.

The ease of program manipulation depends on the amount of memory in your system, but the program will recognize EMS memory. On a 640K machine, for example, the page limit is approximately 70 single-spaced pages.



Software Publishing's Professional Write 2.0 includes pull-down windows for choosing features or referencing keystroke sequences.

Lines are limited to 250 characters in length, more than adequate for most purposes.

Professional Write also restricts headers and footers to two lines of 64 characters each — again, sufficient for most uses. The commands for centering, left align, and right align only work on one line at a time and cannot be applied to a block.

A welcome improvement are the Professional Write 2.0 margin and tab settings — they can be varied within the same document. The new version allows you to jump to any page, and blocks can now be marked from top to bottom and reverse.

Basic correspondence features meet our requirements for cut and paste, search and replace that maintains capitalization, full cursor movement, tabs, a status line that shows the page number, and full-featured indentation. Professional Write 2.0 also lets you redefine tabs, place headers and footers, double space, and append files, so we rate correspondence good.

Both the dictionary and synonym finder (not actually a thesaurus) work well, although the program does not hyphenate or permit soft hyphen insertions. The dictionary does not contain some words that appear in other word processing dictionaries, such as *filename*.



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or footers, and cannot handle words followed by more than one period ("hello...hello") or perform global spelling corrections. Limited by these items, we rate the speller/thesaurus category satisfactory.

The fixed-field address book can now automate lists of up to 2,000 records for use in form letters (related to disk size; on a floppy you are limited to 1,000 records). The accompanying mail-merge capability is nice,

with complex selection criteria possible and a system for including files from Dbase III and standard delimited files. We score mail merge good.

Font management works

quickly and easily, and Professional Write permits downloading at print time, although the program is sensitive to exact font file names and doesn't provide a good indication of a

mismatch. The printing routine works well, and print-time formatting produces good-looking results even with justified, proportionally spaced fonts. You can include several font types in

a document, although no style sheet function is available. The program does handle proportional fonts, but the screen won't show proper line lengths or page breaks as they will be printed, nor is there a preview feature; instead, proportional text is formatted at print time. We rate font handling good because documents can include multiple fonts.

A graphic-include feature takes graph files prepared by standards like Harvard and PFS series (but not Lotus .PIC), and integrates them into text at print time. Basic lines can be drawn, and several line types can be chosen. Graphics are very good.

In most speed tests, Professional Write 2.0 matched office/professional packages and, in some cases, exceeded their results. Speed rates a good score.

The word processor imported and exported a variety of other word processing file formats, including DCA, Word

File Edit Formula Format Data Options Macro Window						
H21		16				
Worksheet1						
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
2	\$56.00	\$6,584.00	\$65.00	\$56.00	\$8.00	\$98,416.00
3	\$51,651.00	\$65.00	\$465.00	\$6,512.00	\$65.00	\$61.00
4	\$651.00	\$654.00	\$321.00	\$6.00	\$84.00	\$6,265.00
5	\$9,684.00	\$654.00	\$6.00	\$651.00	\$6.00	\$636.00
6	\$6,565.00	\$65.00	\$23.00	\$6.00	\$5,198.00	\$6,548.00
7	\$5.00	\$9.00	\$505.00	\$85,146.00	\$1.00	\$1.00
8	\$6.00	\$2.00	\$23.00	\$321.00	\$321.00	\$6,941.00
9	\$654.00	\$85.00	\$5,643.00	\$682.00	\$5.00	\$65.00
10	\$6.00	\$1.00	\$595.00	\$6.00	\$63.00	\$846.00
11	\$8,984.00	\$8.00	\$2,059.00	\$1.00	\$51.00	\$51.00
12	\$65.00	\$5.00	\$35.00	\$54.00	\$635.00	\$9.00
13	\$65.00	\$1,549.00	\$7.00	\$65.00	\$158.00	\$51.00
14	\$356.00	\$5.00	\$9,512.00	\$1.00	\$1.00	\$9.00
15	\$654.00	\$1.00	\$692.00	\$651.00	\$54.00	\$59.00
16	\$69.00	\$6,549.00	\$635.00	\$5,618.00	\$65.00	\$8.00
17	\$0.00	\$25.00	\$92.00	\$654.00	\$50,196.00	\$651.00
18	\$0.00	\$1.00	\$5.00	\$54.00	\$516.00	\$98.00
19	\$0.00	\$6.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$51.00	\$51.00
20	\$0.00	\$65.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$6,985.00	\$5.00
21	\$0.00	\$1.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$6,525.00	\$5.00

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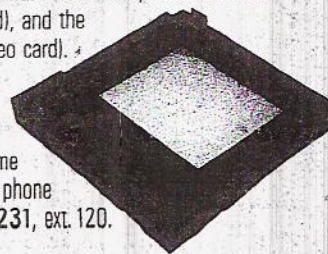
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REPORT CARD

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSOR PROFESSIONAL WRITE VERSION 2.0

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Correspondence	(75)	G
Speller/thesaurus	(50)	S
Mail merge	(50)	G
Fonts	(50)	G
Graphics integration	(25)	VG
Speed	(50)	G
Compatibility	(25)	VG
Documentation		
Ease of learning	(125)	VG
Ease of use	(150)	E
Error handling		
Data integrity	(50)	S
Error messages	(25)	G
Support		
Support policies	(25)	G
Technical support	(25)	U
Value	(150)	VG
Final score		6.9

E=Excellent; VG=Very Good; G=Good; S=Satisfactory; P=Poor; U=Unacceptable.

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Software Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 7210, 1901 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA 94039; (415) 962-0191.
List Price: \$199.
Requires: IBM PC, XT, AT, PS/2, or compatible; DOS 2.0 or later; 512K of RAM; two floppy drives. Available on 3 1/2-inch disk; single LAN user support included; additional LAN packs available.
Pros: Easy to learn and use; nice feature set.
Cons: Can't reach technical support; no Undo command; no line breaks; page breaks displayed with proportional fonts.
Summary: An effective executive word processor for general office use, Professional Write 2.0 is a good choice for memos and correspondence, mail list activities, and short reports.

Perfect, Microsoft Word, and Wordstar. In testing DCA import, we discovered that when the left margin width is zero, Professional Write crashed. The manufacturer says this bug will be fixed in an upcoming release. Otherwise, we had no problems; compatibility rates very good.

DOCUMENTATION:

Documentation consists of a generally clear and comprehensive manual with good examples and explanations. The manual is less effective, however, in explaining issues related to soft fonts and laser printer support.

The program includes very useful online context-sensitive help screens. A short printer manual outlines major capabilities of principal supported printers but offers little guidance for users with nonstandard printer arrangements or

fonts. The main manual's error-message appendix is especially well-documented and helpful. Overall, we consider the documentation good.

EASE OF LEARNING:

With a clean user interface and compre-

hensive context help screens, even computer novices will have little difficulty learning Professional Write 2.0. Its operation is predictable, and the default arrangements produce good results. Moreover, the easy setup and capability to change that setup with minimal technical expertise help beginners greatly. The closest approximation to a tutorial is the "Quick Tour" at the beginning of the manual, which helps users get started and familiar with the product. Professional Write 2.0 gets a very good rating in ease of learning.

EASE OF USE:

For experienced users, the speed keys known as "macros" permit many operations without going through a menu — a helpful advantage. The speed key feature allows the recording of any sequence of keystrokes and will automatically pause for user input. The enhanced directory management utility that sorts file names and permits document word or phrase searches is useful; it looks through the actual text of all documents in a sub-directory for a keyword or phrase. The quick-reference guide is handy and helpful. In general, the program couldn't be easier, earning it an excellent in ease of use.

ERROR HANDLING:

Although the program is well-protected against normal errors caused by faulty keystrokes or open drive doors, no undo or automatic backup features are available (although cut and paste keeps data in a clipboard buffer). Because the program keeps all text in memory, a power failure will delete all editing changes since the last save.

The lack of soft hyphenation can cause problems. If you inadvertently set a right margin only five or six spaces from the left margin and reformat, the program breaks words longer than five or six letters with a space. When you reformat to wider text, the spaces remain and must

be manually removed.

A similar error occurs if you try to convert and load a Wordstar file with line lengths longer than the defaults for Professional Write. A converted file is created with words that are broken at the margin.

When attempting to load a file that is too long for the program, Professional Write 2.0 rejects the file completely — there is no way to handle the file within Professional Write unless you find another program to break the file into smaller pieces.

These problems can be annoying, but the typical user will rarely encounter them; otherwise data integrity is satisfactory.

Error messages are clear and straightforward, without too many on-screen extras or suggestions. The manual, however, thoroughly explains error messages and helps solve and answer problems. This helps the error-message category earn a good rating.

SUPPORT:

Software Publishing Corp. provides a newsletter with update information and an unlimited number of support calls from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific Time, Monday through Friday. Registered owners get upgrade notifications; upgrades from Professional Write 1.0 or PFS Write are priced at \$50. Other guarantees meet industry standards, and we rate Professional Write 2.0's support policies good.

We made seven calls at various times to technical support and found it busy, or (on occasion) we were put on hold for more than five minutes. We never successfully reached anyone in the technical support department, so we rate it unacceptable.

VALUE:

Among executive word processors, Professional Write 2.0 does well performing executive-type word processing functions like basic correspondence and mail merging, competing directly with such products as Q&A Write. Although not quite as powerful, this \$195 program is very easy to learn and use, and if the range of needs is restricted to basic word processing and mail merging, it's an ideal choice. In its class, Professional Write 2.0 does its job well and rates very good in value.

John Lombardi is provost of a major university and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967.

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PROFESSIONAL WRITE • BENCHMARKS

	Microsoft Word 4.0	Professional Write 2.0	Word Perfect 3.0
File			
Load	1.4	1.1	1.5
Save and continue	4.1	1.3	5.6
Import ASCII	1.1	22.0	18.3
Export ASCII	55.3	8.2	22.5
Import DCA	58.7	48.9	20.9
Cursor movement			
Top to bottom	0.5	0.5	2.9
Manual scroll	94.1	97.6	97.7
Reformat	10.8	31.2	25.9 ¹
Search			
Last word	2.2	3.2	2.7
Replace	14.4	152.1	5.5
Append document	0.7	0.8	0.8

Benchmark tests performed on 50K text file; tests based on office and professional word processing product comparison, March 28.
¹Could not globally alter all rulers. Chart indicates the total time to alter each ruler manually.