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All tests conducted on 8-MHz IBM PC AT (640K of RAM, EGA).
 †Could not globally alter all rulers. Chart indicates total time to alter each ruler manually.

However, the reference manual did not cover Office Writer features as extensively as we would have liked. For example, we found no discussion of macros or cursor movement. A number of features that should be in the reference manual were only found in the learning manual, inconvenient when you need to quickly access information.

The printer booklet and supplement provide a host of useful information for using Office Writer printer driver and font editing/creating tools. Both are clear and helpful but require more experience and technical expertise than the average user may have.

On-screen help is great although the index is not as effective as in other programs. The context-sensitive help is particularly useful, but the program does not give any help at the main menus other than a quick index of all available menu functions. This is better than in Version 5.0, but it is not true context-sensitive help. Error messages are useful, and the program's on-screen tutorial is a nice addition.

Although we gave the previous version of Office Writer's documentation a good score, because of the incomplete reference manual we cannot rate this version's documentation higher than satisfactory.

EASE OF LEARNING:

Office Writer's highly structured menu system and help screens combined with good information in the learning manual makes this an easy program to learn. For the average user, Office Writer can be set up, the on-screen text tutorial completed, and the program learned to the level of preparing basic correspondence in less than two hours.

Full knowledge of Office Writer will take four or five hours depending on the expertise of the user. Complete mastery of the most complex aspects of the program may take longer.

We rate Office Writer's ease of learning very good.

EASE OF USE:

Office Writer's many features and capabilities make it an easy system to use, especially when preparing multiple form letters or filling out templates for a database. Highly structured menus move the user from major function to major function, often requiring a complete exit from one to access the features of another, which controls the user's interaction with the system.

Combined with the clumsy editing features, this inhibits ease of use once you've passed through the learning curve. Quite good with small documents, Office Writer's effectiveness declines as it

approaches its maximum document size, making this system much less easy to use for large documents.

We previously rated Office Writer's ease of use very good. However, with a new version that still contains ease of use problems we would have liked to see eradicated, we must limit our ease of use score to good.

ERROR HANDLING:

Office Writer has a timed backup feature and will create backup files when compiling indexes or doing other procedures. The one-level Undo command is weak, permitting deleted text to be lost if the cursor is moved before Undelete is invoked.

Simple user errors such as an open disk drive door or mistyped keys do not lose data, and the system generates extensive prompts for operations that could cause data loss, such as exiting without saving.

We rate error handling good.

SUPPORT:

Office Writer technical support is provided by mail and on a non-toll-free line during normal working hours. We therefore rate support policies satisfactory.

We made several calls to technical support and each time received assistance promptly from a very well-informed technician. On general questions about the product's capabilities and functions, the answers were provided quickly and correctly.

We posed a problem to technical support that involved using Office Writer

with an HP Laserjet II. Even though technical support never completely resolved our problem, the staff was very helpful and went out of their way to assist us. We give technical support a score of very good.

VALUE:

At \$495, Office Writer falls in the middle of the pack with other office/professional word processors in both price and performance. The program is easy to learn and is great for performing a variety of basic word processing tasks. For the office accustomed to the Wang system, Office Writer is the word processor of choice. We rate Office Writer a good value.

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

REPORT CARD		
WORD PROCESSOR OFFICE WRITER VERSION 6.0		
Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Correspondence	(40)	Good
Speller/thesaurus	(40)	Very Good
Mail merge	(30)	Very Good
Outlining	(25)	Good
Table of contents and indexing	(20)	Good
Footnotes	(25)	Good
Document tracking	(15)	Poor
Fonts and style sheets	(25)	Satisfactory
Graphics integration	(25)	N/A
Speed	(125)	Good
Compatibility	(30)	Excellent
Documentation	(100)	Satisfactory
Ease of learning	(125)	Very Good
Ease of use	(150)	Good
Error handling		Good
Support		
Support policies	(25)	Satisfactory
Technical support	(25)	Very Good
Value	(100)	Good
Final score		6.2

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Office Solutions Inc., Gustor Services Department, 49 Kessel Court, Madison, WI 53711; (608) 274-5047.

List Price: \$495.

Requires: IBM PC or compatible; PC/MS-DOS 2.0; 384K of RAM; two floppy drives, hard disk recommended.

Pros: Wang emulation; easy to learn; nice forms management features.

Cons: Not as good with larger documents; clumsy operation with some features; graphics only available optionally.

Summary: A great choice for Wang-oriented offices, Office Writer provides strong basic word processing capabilities, although it is less effective with longer documents or tasks requiring extensive formatting.

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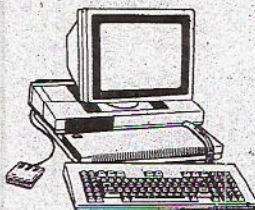
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