IMPRESSIONS

Proficient Autocad Enhancer Offers New Way to Input Autocad Data

I recently saw a demonstration of a product that seemed to flag a future in computing. The Proficient Autocad Enhancer from Communication Intelligence Corp. (CIC) provides a new method of input for Autocad through handwriting recognition and artificial-intelligence technology.
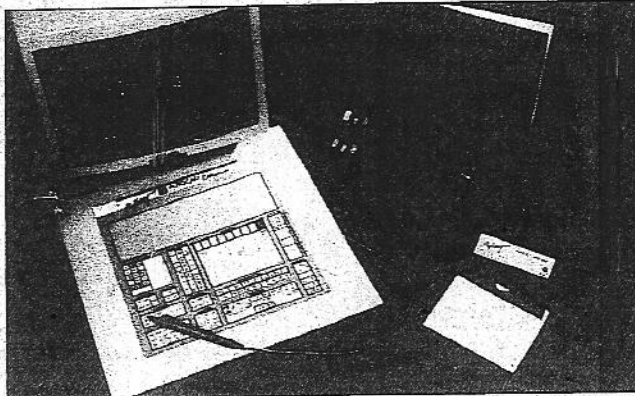
Proficient allows you to access over 185 macros by simply writing a one- to three-letter command with a stylus and digitizing pad (not manufactured by CIC). Proficient Enhancer comes with an expansion card for its handwriting recognition capability, software for the Autocad interface, and a template to place over the digitizing pad.

Proficient interfaces with the Autocad menu structure as a mouse would. But the more fascinating features come with the handwriting recognition system and macro capability.

The product's 185 "prefab" macros are designed mnemonically. For example, to access the circle tool you type *C* and to access the line tool you type *L*. A button on the stylus lets you switch easily between macro and drawing modes. Less frequently used macros have two or three character combinations but are still mnemonic.

The Proficient software lets you program your own macros; the command string can be up to 127 characters in length. This allows complex but frequently used processes to be set into macro form.

Using the stylus and pad for all entry into Autocad saves time and energy. No time is spent switching from keyboard to mouse commands, and the user's eyes never need to leave the screen or drawing area. On top of this, there is no need to plow through menus to get to the more obscure commands that a particular user

> ## "P
> *roficient inter-faces with the Autocad menu structure as a mouse would.*

might access frequently.

Being a 70-word-per-minute typist, I was a little skeptical about the speed of writing a character as opposed to typing it. But CIC also addresses that issue in the theory behind its products. CIC says that in programs such as Autocad or applications requiring data entry, the user rarely has to type more than five characters at once. CIC's research showed it that it takes a typist from five to 10 *words* to get up to speed. As I watched the demonstration, I was amazed at how quickly the user could draw, change the viewing plane, or access other Autocad options. It did not seem that he was rushing, yet the access of commands was far quicker than with a mouse.

Proficient is compatible with Autocad, Versions 2.5 or higher. It will run with a Seiko DT3503-10, -11, and -12; Hitachi Puma 1212D; Kurta Is/One with cordless or two-switch corded pen; GTCO DP5A Digipad; Houston Instruments Hipad Plus; or the Summagraphics

The Proficient Autocad Enhancer offers increased power for Autocad, Release 10 3-D users and greater macro customization capabilities.

MM 1201.

At $649, Proficient is reasonably priced. However, you must also have a digitizing pad, which boosts the overall price. Interface software compatible with Proficient, called Write-On, for Lotus, Pagemaker, and Word Perfect, is also available for $189.

Communication Intelligence Corp., 33 Ravenswood Ave. PN 257, Menlo Park, CA 94025; (800) 888-8242.

— *Sally J. Douglas*

Dac Easy Word 3.0

DAC SOFTWARE

Dac Easy software, king of the low-cost accounting world, has issued a minor revision of its inexpensive executive word processing program, Dac Easy Word, relabeled Version 3.0.

In addition to some minor changes in internal operations, Dac Easy Word 3.0 includes a few new functions. A new command (Alt-A) moves the cursor to the top of the page, while another (Alt-0) undeletes lines and words. Dac Merge merges the document on screen with customer or vendor lists from Dac Easy Account and Employee records. You can modify the file structure of the built-in minimail list database, and a Pack command removes records temporarily deleted from the database. Headers and footers can include a code, @F, that prints the current file name. You can also exit to DOS, execute commands, and return to Dac Easy Word. The manual has been slightly revised and reprinted in larger type.

One objection we had to the previous version of Dac Easy Word was its tendency to crash under some conditions. While the specific conditions that crashed the previous version no longer cause problems, a new set of difficulties has appeared.

Dac Easy Word 3.0 permits four windows on-screen, each of which can have a different document but not different views on the same document. If you load a 48-page document in window one, for example, and reformat it to center all lines, load 48-page documents in each of the other three windows, and then attempt to reformat the other documents, the program simply quits working, with the message "one moment" flashing endlessly on screen. A soft

reset is required to restart.

Technical support includes 10 minutes of free telephone support. We were able to get through to a technician who answered our questions competently. Dac Easy Word's price is $69.95.

DAC Software Inc., 17950 Preston Road, Suite 800, Dallas, TX 75252; (214) 248-0205.

— *John Lombardi*

Zipkey

ERIC ISAACSON SOFTWARE

Here's a little product so simple that it doesn't take one minute to demonstrate, and yet it will prove so indispensable to some people that they'll fall on it with glad cries.

Zipkey is nothing more than a RAM-resident ZIP-code finder. It works exactly the way you would expect: You pop it up, type the name of the city, and it gives you the ZIP code. Or, you can enter the ZIP code and get the city and state. It acts just like a hard-copy ZIP-code directory — but have you ever tried to use one of those books? Oy! Trust me, this is no recipe program: The makers of Zipkey have identified a trivial little task that truly is better done on a computer than on paper. Even if you just need to look up a ZIP code once in a while, it's easier to find out which subdirectory you stuck this thing in than fret over one of those cumbersome paperback books.

To make life easier, Zipkey actually shows you, as you type in the city name, all the cities that are matches so far. You enter *San* and it says *too many cities*, but when you get to *San C* (it's not case-sensitive) it shows you *0 — San Carlos (94070)*, and *1 — San Clemente (92672)*. You don't have to type out the entire city name, misspelling it in the process. For multiple-ZIP cities you get a list of all the ZIPs for that city; the program doesn't yet break them down by street (maybe later). Zipkey does not support extended ZIP codes (e.g., 77586-4261).

Here's another time-saver. In memory-resident mode, Zipkey will take the ZIP code it finds nearest the cursor position and will paste into the underlying document any combination of city, state (abbreviated or spelled out), and ZIP code, with some other refinements I won't go into.

When memory-resident, Zipkey takes

as little as 19K of RAM if you leave the data file (800K of data compressed down to 122K, somehow); or you can load the data into RAM, taking up another 128K of conventional or, if you have it, EMS memory. The nonresident version loads entirely into memory and performs instantly even on our slowpoke XT.

Zipkey can be had by subscription for $30 per year, which entitles you to annual updates; with higher subscription fees you get more frequent updates (apparently new ZIP codes appear frequently). Joe Bob sez check it out.

Eric Isaacson Software, 416 E. University Ave., Bloomington, IN 47401; (812) 339-1811.

— *Michael McCarthy*

W.P. Kingsfield

INFORMATION RESEARCH

For Word Perfect users who don't like the standard help system's keyboard template display, the W.P. Kingsfield memory-resident (TSR) pop-up template offers an alternative.

This utility uses 35K of memory to provide both a pop-up template and a hook into the Word Perfect help system.

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> *.P. Kingsfield provides a pop-up template in the Word Perfect help system.*

After loading the program into memory, whenever you type Alt-Enter, a three-line template appears at the bottom of the screen showing the meaning of each of the Word Perfect function keys. If you hold down the Alt key, you see Alt function key names; if you hold down the Shift key you get the Shift function key names, and so on. If you type a question mark and then a function key you are put into the Word Perfect help system for that key.

Everything works as described, and the utility is nifty. However, it adds little to the existing Word Perfect help system, which gives you a complete template of function keys by hitting F3 twice. This then takes you to the correct help page when you type any function-key combination. The advantage of the Word Perfect version is that it doesn't take 35K and it comes with the program.

W.P. Kingsfield has to be loaded first in any set of TSRs or you may have a conflict, and in the current version there is no way to get it out of memory once loaded. The Word Perfect template remains active in whatever program you use, so you can get the Word Perfect commands in the middle of a Lotus 1-2-3 session if you so choose.

All in all, this is a handy but not very significant utility for the small audience of people who don't like the Word Perfect F3 keyboard template. The product works with Word Perfect 4.1 and higher.

Information Research, 2421 Ivy Road, Charlottesville, Virginia, 22901; (800) 368-3542.

— *John Lombardi*