

# REVIEWS

After panel discussions, glossy advertisements, and thousands of pages and millions of words in computer publications, Ami Professional is now a major mainstream word processor. It is dependent on Microsoft Windows, whose graphics orientation is fundamental rather than additional. Ami's wealth of features and graphical presentation combine to effectively begin a new era in word processing.

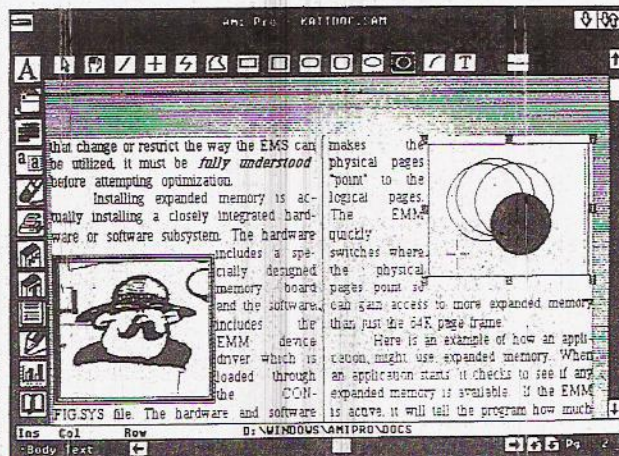
While Ami Professional is not perfect, its powerful complement of well-implemented features places it in the top category along with such heavyweights as Word Perfect and Microsoft Word, ahead of popular office products such as Multimate, OfficeWriter, Wordstar Professional, and Displaywrite. In some cases, Ami Professional offers features previously uncommon in word processing — such as table generation and charting. And Ami features a true graphical user interface capable of displaying and editing WYSIWYG documents on-screen.

Ami's only rival as a graphical word processor is NBI Legend, which also runs under Windows and has superior typographical capabilities but lacks traditional high-end word processing features such as a thesaurus. Look for the imminent release of Microsoft Word for Windows, bringing yet a third option in office/professional Windows word processing.

## FEATURES:

Several notable features distinguish Ami Professional from its competitors. It has a fully WYSIWYG and editable page layout available in a variety of view levels, compared to a non-editable preview in other office/professional packages such as Word Perfect. Another distinction is that you lay out graphics in special "frames" and manipulate them on-screen as objects, instead of the traditional word processing method of issuing line- and character-oriented commands. The frames can be opaque or transparent, have text wrapped around them, and have several types of borders. As a Windows product, Ami Professional makes limited use of DDE (dynamic data exchange) so you can link it to other software products that support DDE (such as creating a hotlink with Microsoft Excel). Not all Windows products support DDE. Finally, Ami lets you create tables and charts and also features extensive free-form drawing capabilities.

Ami's unique interface is a highly interactive and visual method of handling layout tasks. Once you get used to this, the interaction between graphics frames, page and paragraph style sheets, and text becomes second nature, and when you return to a traditional text-based word processor you immediately realize its limitations. Ami Professional lets you enter text in a non-graphics draft mode without all the overhead of graphics formatting; this converts the system into a proficient text editor, a technique previously implemented effectively by Microsoft Word. The draft mode high-



Ami Pro's layout mode can look mighty desktop-publishing-like, with a full set of drawing tools, multiple columns, imported scanned images, and myriad icons.

## Ami Professional 1.1 Begins New Era in Word Processing

*This Windows-based word processor offers a cornucopia of features, easy-to-use interface.*

BY JOHN LOSEBARDI CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

lights various styles, such as boldface or italics, by changing the text's color (which you can specify for each style).

Once your text says what it should, you switch into the fully editable layout mode, which shows all of your document's formatting and styles including fonts, margins, footnotes, page numbers, and graphics. Unlike preview modes in programs such as Wordstar Professional or Word Perfect, you have full control over the program in this mode, although it operates more slowly than in draft mode; however, its speed has been increased over the executive version of Ami. There are several views, including enlarged, full-page, and a working mode.

Ami Professional looks and acts very much like the original Ami, an executive word processor which has been out for about a year and is still available. Using Ami's interface, Ami Professional adds numerous high-end features. As a word processing engine, it does what all the best high-end programs do. You can enter text, check spelling, look up synonyms in the thesaurus, cut and paste, find and replace, enter footnotes or endnotes (but not both), or compile an index or table of contents.

Ami Professional sorts lines and paragraphs using ascending or descending sequences, alphabetic or numeric sorting, and multiple keys. It will number lines and pages, manage columns, and hyphen-

ate. You can have multiple windows open, even as many as seven or eight — up to what your memory will allow — although you can't have them look into the same document (except for opening the previous version of the file). The program also includes headers, footers, mail merge, and comment notes.

This partial review of basic features gives a large-scale view of a program that does what's needed for general word processing, but Ami Professional has a host of additional features that narrow the gap between word processing and desktop publishing. These capabilities distinguish Ami Professional from its prime competitors significantly. For example, text, graphics, and tables can be treated as single objects. A reasonably large selection of clip art, while primitive compared to what is available in graphics packages such as Arts & Letters, is included with Ami. Text can be wrapped around frames, which can also be made transparent or opaque to anything underneath. Imported images can be scaled, rotated, or moved around in a frame, and grayscale TIFF images imported into a frame can be enhanced using contrast/brightness and other controls. Extensive tables can be drawn that include various fonts or provide a fill-in form, and Ami will even perform simple arithmetic on rows and columns. Extensive charts, such as pie charts or histograms, can be generated

from a variety of data sets, including tables.

For typesetters and desktop publishing mavens, Ami Professional's approach will seem completely normal with its graphical interface, icons, floating style-sheet menus, and treatment of art as single objects. However, if you're unaccustomed to desktop publishing or graphics but more familiar with Word Perfect, Word, or Displaywrite methodology, Ami's approach to layout chores takes some careful rethinking. In the end, of course, the WYSIWYG system is more flexible and adaptable than the traditional lines and words, especially for highly complex layouts. And there is the added benefit of being able to see what you are doing exactly as it will appear on paper. Gone is the drudgery of placing formatting codes into the text stream to insert a simple graphic.

Ami Professional runs under Microsoft Windows, and includes a run-time version. If you have Windows, Ami Professional exploits its integrated capabilities to a degree. For example, Ami supports DDE, which lets you create "hot links" (but only one-way) with other Windows products supporting DDE, such as Microsoft Excel or Polaris Packrat. For example, if you link an Excel spreadsheet file with an Ami table, you can set it so that any changes made in Excel can be made to be updated automatically in Ami. Ami Professional also imports and exports to and from a variety of document formats.

All in all, Ami Professional has an admirable collection of features. Its omissions are minor, such as foreign language dictionaries, multiple indexes, or cross-referencing capabilities.

While major competitors such as Word Perfect and Microsoft Word have many high-end word processing capabilities, when it comes to the implementation, Ami's superior layout and graphics-related capabilities in addition to standard features put it a step above the rest.

## PERFORMANCE:

As a basic editing tool, Ami Professional has all the basics and a host of enhancements such as mouse control for cut and paste, search and replace using wild cards, redefinable tabs, and a wide variety of customizable paragraph styles. The availability of two editing windows, extensive document tracking, and automatic date stamping also contribute to an excellent rating in basic editing.

Layout capabilities in Ami Professional are clearly superior to those of competitive text-based word processors. The frame-based graphics tools are flexible and comprehensive. You can easily create customizable, font-laden tables and then automatically draw charts from a set of imported numbers or from a table. With multiple views of the text, true WYSIWYG viewing and editing, widow/orphan control, multiple-column support, portrait/landscape orientation, and the availability of all layout options

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within each frame, this product is as good or better than any word processor on the market today. We rate layout capabilities excellent.

As you might expect in a graphics-oriented WYSIWYG system, font support in Ami Professional is top-notch. You can change fonts anywhere in the text (including while in draft mode); you see the fonts on-screen if you choose that view; and you can edit while the fonts display as they will print, although response is slower in this mode. The range of fonts supported is wide, handled primarily by Windows, and downloading of bit-mapped or Postscript soft fonts is automatic using Windows to support both fonts and printing.

Therefore, we rate font support excellent.

Style sheets can be defined or chosen from a set of boilerplates for both pages and paragraphs. Styles are easily created, modified, selected, or stored and include a wide variety of features, including hyphenation, fonts, margins, columns, or even what types of lines surround a page and how close they should be to the text. You'll have to get used to the paragraph/page style-sheet orientation, but once you grasp the concept you'll find it superb. We rate style sheets excellent.

The program's spelling checker maintains capitalization and is supported by a sizable dictionary (130,000 words). The thesaurus includes synonym definitions, and when synonyms appear, you can rerun the thesaurus on them. However, the spelling checker is slower than on text-based systems, and the suggested corrections/guesses are not as comprehensive or intuitive as Word Perfect's, for example.

Nevertheless, the wide range of capabilities and features easily add up to an excellent score for the spelling checker and thesaurus.

Mail merging features extensive external file format support, the capability to select and merge conditional statements, data-file sorting, and the capability to skip a bad record. We rate mail merging very good.

Outlining capabilities feature auto-

level indentation and a variety of bullets and numbering schemes. It does not offer collapsed/expanded outline views like a true electronic outliner. Because of the automatic bulleting and since a predefined outline style sheet is included, we rate outlining good.

Table of contents and indexing have the basics covered for a single index and one table of contents per document. Ami Professional handles multiple levels in both indexes and table of contents. Once a table of contents is generated, you can use the mouse to click on a page number and Ami will jump to that page. You can only have one index or table of contents per document. One problem is that although the manual says you can mark a word as an index entry in draft or layout mode, you can only mark it in layout mode—which will be slower. Overall, we rate table of contents and index generation capabilities good.

Footnotes can be numbered automatically, and they can be located at the end of a document or at the bottom of a page.

You can automatically enter page numbers. However, no automatic cross-referencing is allowed (such as "see page XX" with the page number being automatically updated). As with indexing, you can only have one footnote series per document. We rate footnoting very good.

Ami Professional supports a comprehensive and powerful macro language as well as a simple keystroke-recording macro facility. These can be stored under file names and recalled with short-cut keystrokes. The macro language has functions and conditionals as well as the capability to access all the features and menus of the main program (including access to DDE and DLL for special Windows linking tasks). However, full use of the macro facility requires the special macro programming language manual, which only comes on special request after you send in your registration. Ours had not arrived at the time of the review, but even the basic macro facilities are extensive enough according to our testing criteria for word processing to earn this program an excellent rating before adding in the programming fea-

tures.

Ami Professional has fabulous graphics capabilities for a word processor. The program will import graphics into frames from almost all known graphics formats including PIC, PCX, EPS, TIFF, and Windows Metafile and bit-mapped graphics pasted from the Windows Clipboard. Graphics created in Ami and the included Ami clip art are stored in Ami's own graphics format, SDW. These files are treated differently than standard imported graphics (instead of importing, you must append them—a procedure not immediately evident in the documentation). The program rotates bit maps, permits editing of images, will handle

scanned images, and has some facilities for enhancing gray-scale TIFF images. Also, Ami Professional has drawing capabilities, box, line, fill, and circle tools, and the capability to include text and graphics into the same frame. We had no problems importing any of the files.

We rate Ami Professional's graphics support excellent.

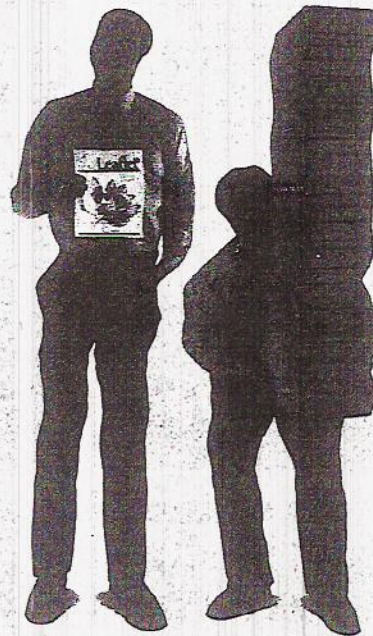
Printer support is very good, another feature handled primarily by Windows, including the HP Laserjet and Deskjet series, Postscript printers, and some color support.

We therefore rate printer support excellent.

Compatibility is outstanding, setting

XEROX

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table of contents, cross-referencing, global pagination, and anchored illustrations make them just as easy. And with either, Ventura's networking capability enhances group productivity.

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#### BENCHMARKS

INFO  
WORLD

#### Office/Professional Word Processors

	Ami Professional (draft) Version 2.1	Ami Professional (layout) Version 2.1	Microsoft Word Version 4.0	Word Perfect Version 5.0
<b>File</b>				
Load	13	29	1	2
Save & continue	10	13	4	4
Import ASCII	15	25	1	Varies <sup>1</sup>
Export ASCII	10	12	55	8
Import DCA/RFT	27	38	59	20
<b>Cursor movement</b>				
Top to bottom	<1 <sup>2</sup>	<1 <sup>2</sup>	<1	2
Manual scroll	1:46 <sup>3</sup>	1:37 <sup>3</sup>	1:34	45
Reformat (layout mode only)		25	11	20 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Search</b>				
Last word	12	21	2	2
Global replace	11	48	14	6
<b>Append document</b>	5	21	<1	1

All times in seconds, unless otherwise noted (1:00 is one minute).

<sup>1</sup>Word Perfect's Import ASCII score varied from eight to 15 seconds.

<sup>2</sup>Rising mouse in Ami Professional.

<sup>3</sup>Our tests called for using the down arrow key for this test. We used the down-arrow key in Ami's draft mode and the scroll bar in the layout mode, since it would optimize performance and match real-world operation.

<sup>4</sup>Could not globally alter rulers/style sheets in Word Perfect. Score indicates the time required to alter each ruler/style sheet individually.



something of a new standard in this category. Ami Professional will import and export a staggering number of file formats. While not every feature will translate from one system to another, the strong file-conversion routines represent a major advantage of this system. In addition, Ami Professional can use spreadsheet files, importing them into the powerful Ami Professional table facility that operates as if it were a mini-spreadsheet within the text frame. Also,

since Ami supports DDE, you can hot-link other Windows products that support the format.

We therefore rate Ami Professional's compatibility excellent.

Speed in Ami must be considered on two levels. While the WYSIWYG layout mode is slower than its draft mode, the speed has been enhanced over the Ami executive version and you can actually type at a reasonable pace. For entering lots of text, however, draft mode is still the best choice. Ami Professional makes much use of the hard disk for files, menus, screens, and other information. While a sufficient amount of memory and the installation of the disk cache driver that comes with the package speeds up the program significantly, Ami Professional is still no speed demon. Even in draft mode, its response to typed keys was sluggish on an 8-MHz AT; a faster machine helps significantly. The program is also dependent to some extent on the speed of various hardware devices, such as a monitor. This is a program that pushes standard AT hardware to the

limit. frames, styles, or layout, you'll need extra time to get installed and running.

Installation also depends on whether Windows is available; if the installation time for Windows is included, this product takes at least an hour to get up and running. But if you are installing the run-time version, a half-hour will complete the installation and, if all goes well, you can be producing relatively simple documents within another half hour or so. The step-by-step user guide helps considerably.

Installation can be very complex when it comes to memory usage. This mostly refers to issues associated with Windows, and the on-line memory document mentioned earlier can be helpful (except, ironically, you'll have to have Ami installed to read it).

Overall Ami Professional is very easy to use and intuitive, especially considering it is completely menu- and mouse-driven and WYSIWYG. There are barriers to overcome for any newcomer, especially to a product as feature-rich as this one, but Ami Professional does as

you can set up to four levels. The Undo reverses most activities except for sorts. If you are running under a lower-end system, such as a 10-MHz 80286 PC AT, you may find you'll have to tweak your AUTOEXEC.BAT files (such as altering your Path command to give Ami priority) or make sure you have enough hard disk space for Ami to store temporary files.

Overall, we rate error handling very good.

#### SUPPORT:

Samna provides a 90-day, unconditional money-back guarantee with Ami Professional. Support also includes BBS support on CompuServe and fax support. Free technical support is available on a regular phone line. We rate support policies very good.

We called technical support for help with several problems, ranging from simple font-selection questions to complex problems involving memory management. The technicians worked with us extensively, researching our memory problem and promptly getting back to us. The support line was easily reached in the middle of the business day and was staffed with high-quality, knowledgeable support personnel.

We rate technical support very good.

#### VALUE:

At \$495, Ami Professional is priced competitively. Its graphics capabilities make it more valuable for anyone with special needs and complex document layout tasks, and Ami is a natural choice for Windows users. For these people, Ami Professional is a very good value.

For users with essentially text-oriented office tasks with little involvement with complex layouts or graphic manipulations, Ami Professional is still a very good value, simply because of its incredible WYSIWYG capabilities.

Ami Professional can match features and most areas of performance with Word and Word Perfect, the market leaders in office/professional word processing.

While speed is its weakest point, in many cases Ami Professional outperforms the competition, and has laid the path for word processing in the 1990s. □

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

## REPORT CARD INFO WORLD

OFFICE/PROFESSIONAL  
WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE

### Ami Professional

VERSION 2.1

Criteria	(Weighting)	Score
<b>Performance</b>		
Basic editing	(50)	Excellent
Layout capabilities	(25)	Excellent
Fonts	(20)	Excellent
Style sheets	(20)	Excellent
Spelling checker/thesaurus	(50)	Excellent
Mail merge	(25)	Very Good
Outlining	(20)	Good
Table of contents and indexing	(20)	Good
Footnotes	(20)	Very Good
Macros	(25)	Excellent
<b>Graphics</b>		
Integration	(30)	Excellent
Printer support	(30)	Excellent
Compatibility	(40)	Excellent
Speed	(50)	Good
<b>Documentation</b>	(100)	Very Good
<b>Ease of learning</b>	(100)	Good
<b>Ease of use</b>	(200)	Very Good
<b>Error handling</b>	(75)	Very Good
<b>Support</b>		
Support policies	(25)	Very Good
Technical support	(25)	Very Good
<b>Value</b>	(50)	Very Good
<b>Final score</b>		<b>7.9</b>

#### PRODUCT SUMMARY

**Company:** Samna Corp., 5600 Glenridge Drive, Atlanta, GA 30342; (800) 831-9679.

**List Price:** \$495.

**Requires:** IBM PC AT or compatible; 10-megabyte hard disk; graphics support; MS-PC-DOS 3.0; 640K of RAM; mouse optional but recommended; Microsoft Windows (run-time version included).

**Pros:** Powerful graphics-based program with superior WYSIWYG editing; excellent tables and charting; outstanding compatibility; strong font support; capable editing; strong mail merge and macro programming.

**Cons:** Considerable complexity; substantial memory/hardware requirements; slow, especially on lower-end hardware configurations.

**Summary:** Ami Professional is a fine, capable Windows graphical office/professional word processor, a perfect model to lead off word processing in the 1990s.

**“Ami Professional's unique interface is a highly interactive and visual method of handling layout tasks.”**

limit.

When we consider the options, such as a reasonably quick draft mode, with the slightly slower speed of operation of Ami Professional as compared with competitive word processors, we rate speed good.

#### DOCUMENTATION:

Ami Professional comes with two main manuals and some additional information sheets, booklets, and on-line files. The user's guide serves as an overview of features and capabilities that takes you through the basic operations of Ami Professional, explaining the concepts that drive the system, such as frames, fonts, styles, layouts, graphics, and charts. The reference manual supplements but does not replace the user's guide by providing more detailed, formal descriptions of features.

The manuals are clear and quite complete, but often you need to consult both manuals to get an answer, and sometimes the explanations do not contain enough information or examples to clarify unfamiliar concepts or functions. Also, there are occasional mistakes, although minor, that are not updated in the on-line documentation. Since memory issues are often a problem when using Windows, especially on a lower-end 286-based system, you may want to read the special on-line Ami memory file for a discussion of memory problems.

On-line help offers extensive context-sensitive, indexed help, and error messages provide adequate information for most conditions.

Weighing our few reservations with the plentiful information both on paper and on-line, we rate documentation very good.

#### EASE OF LEARNING:

For Windows users Ami Professional is very easy to learn and operates very intuitively, but it is less so for anyone confronting a Windows application for the first time. Further, if you're new to desktop publishing concepts such as

much as possible to ease the introduction. Held back somewhat by the complexity in memory installation issues, we rate ease of learning good.

#### EASE OF USE:

Once up and running, Ami Professional becomes very easy to use. Its visible interface and multiple views, shortcut keys for many common functions, pull-down menus, and help system all combine to increase an experienced user's ability to work quickly and efficiently. Ami Professional has an unusual combination of display options and preferences that allow you to adjust the editing interface. You can have grid marks horizontally or vertically or both; you can show rulers or not; you can see your text in various sizes and with various levels of detail; and you can manipulate the sidebar of icons for selecting functions to include whatever functions you like (such as Undo, printing, calling up the drawing menu, etc.). Ease of use is further enhanced by menus that appear only when they are needed, such as the table features, so that they don't otherwise clutter the screen with listings of unselectable items when inactive. Yet the program's multilayered complexity detracts slightly from Ami Professional's otherwise superior ease of use, and even the most seasoned user will take several days to gain mastery over the many features. With this in mind, we rate ease of use very good.

#### ERROR HANDLING:

Ami Professional handles errors with style and informative messages. There is an automatic-save option that can be set to times you specify, although it will not work until you create, close, and reopen a document. Ami cannot lose files on disk, although if the auto-backup is turned off you can lose what is being edited. Ami Professional uses temporary files for spill files and never seems to delete them from the disk, leaving that as a manual chore. A multiple-level Undo is available which

#### RELATED REVIEWS

Office/Professional Word Processors

**First Look, Ami Professional, MBI Legend, and Microsoft Windows for Word**, October 9

**Ami** (executive version, in comparison of executive word processors), August 7

**Wordstar Professional 5.5**, July 3

**Microsoft Word 5.0**, June 19

**Product Comparison: Office/Professional Word Processing**, January 23:

Displaywrite 4  
Lotus Manuscript  
Microsoft Word (4.0)  
Multimate Advantage  
Nota Bene  
Office Writer  
PC Write  
Samna Word IV  
Sprint  
Total Word  
Word Perfect  
Wordstar Professional 5.0  
Wordstar 2000 Plus  
Xywrite III Plus