

blems noted in our Baler 5.0 review have been corrected. You can now specify that the user be warned if an attempt is made to exit with unsaved data, and the compiler now handles password-protected files properly — it ignores them. It also corrects problems that occur if you attempt to hide all columns in a worksheet. Error handling rates a very good score.

SUPPORT:

Baler Software provides unlimited free telephone support from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Central time. The number is not toll free. Support policies are satisfactory.

Our calls were answered immediately, and we spent no time on hold. Technicians were knowledgeable. We rate technical support very good.

VALUE:

Priced at \$795, Baler/xs is the most expensive spreadsheet compiler we've seen — but it's also easily the most comprehensive. Since you can distribute the run-time program and compiled worksheets with no royalties, Baler can quickly pay for itself. If you can do without linking external functions and some of the other advanced features, you can save some money by purchasing the \$495 Baler 5.0 program. But if you demand the ultimate spreadsheet compiler, you'll find Baler/xs to be a very good value. □

Contributing editor John Walkenbach is consumer research manager for a leading savings and loan association in Southern California.

REPORT CARD INFO WORLD

SPREADSHEET COMPILER

Baler/xs VERSION 1.0

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance	(400)	Very Good
Documentation	(80)	Very Good
Ease of learning	(40)	Excellent
Ease of use	(120)	Very Good
Error handling	(80)	Very Good
Support		
Support policies	(40)	Satisfactory
Technical support	(40)	Very Good
Value	(200)	Very Good
Final score		7.5

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Baler Software Corp., 1400 Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008; (708) 506-9700.

List Price: \$795.

Requires: IBM PC, PS/2, or compatible; 640K of RAM, DOS 2.1 or later; hard disk recommended.

Pros: Can distribute compiled worksheet with no royalties; highly customizable; can link external routines; easy to use.

Cons: Does not support WK3 format in Lotus 1-2-3, Release 3.0; cannot generate unique random numbers; some incompatibilities with DOS Share and Windows 3.0.

Summary: An advanced compiler that converts Lotus WK1 worksheet files into stand-alone programs. Also includes extensive customization facilities and the capability to incorporate high-level language functions.

Professional Write Brings More Devices, Features

Version 2.2 includes better font management, unique grammar checking.

BY JOHN LOMBARDI REVIEW BOARD

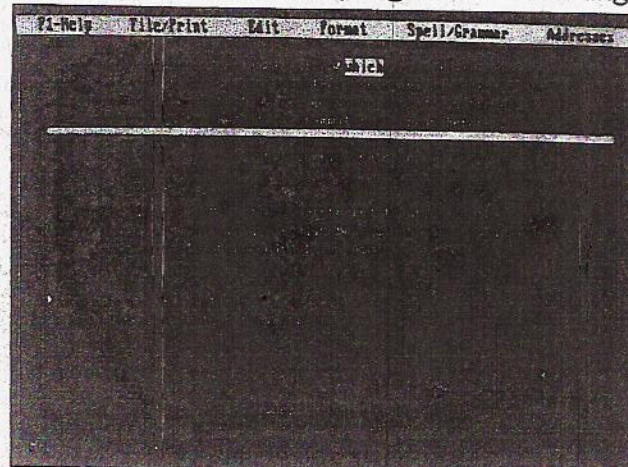
Among executive word processing programs, Professional Write has long held a position as an effective, easy to use program with many features and capabilities. But the competition grows more capable with each update. This new release, Version 2.2, brings more devices and better font management for laser printers, a nifty grammar checker, the capability to handle larger documents, and hyphenation in preview mode.

FEATURES:

Long known for its carefully constructed user interface, which makes this one of the easiest word processors to learn and use, Professional Write has all the basics. You can edit, spell, format, print, and do mail-merge chores. Not designed to compete with the heavyweight office and professional programs, Professional Write has no footnotes or endnotes, no special features for newspaper columns, minimal graphics integration, and few of the word publishing features characteristic of office and professional packages at the high end of the spectrum. Nonetheless, the program has a good page preview and does fonts with reasonable facility, including a transparent downloading capability that is at least as good as the font management in Windows.

PERFORMANCE:

Professional Write's basic editing has full cursor movements, traditional cut-and-paste functions, good search-and-replace capabilities that maintain capitalization, regular and decimal tabs, and a status line that includes font information as well as cursor location. While the program has added hyphenation in this version, you do the hyphenation along with page preview or when printing. Hyphenation can be turned on and off, and previously



Professional Write 2.2 integrates its own version of grammar checker Grammatik IV, which aids in the proper use of restrictive and non-restrictive phrases, for example.

hyphenated text can be restored without hyphens.

This program also supports keystroke macros with a macro recorder that captures the keystrokes as you enter them. Although Professional Write does not support multiple windows, its basic editing nonetheless earns a very good rating.

The spelling checker offers several suggestions, maintains capitalization, and supports user dictionaries. While there is no thesaurus, the program includes a synonym finder. The elaborate grammar checker has multiple styles, a customizable module that permits you to identify which of several grammatical faults you want identified, and several readability indexes. We rate the spelling

checker and thesaurus very good.

Professional Write has a mail-merge module that will work with the fixed-field Address Book program (a fixed-field and format address manager that is part of Professional Write) or with ASCII delimited files. If the data come from the Address Book, the sort and select criteria are extensive, including conditionals and approximate matching. (You can append an ASCII file to the Address Book, then your ASCII file benefits from the same selection criteria.) The Address Book has a limit of about 2,000 records, so longer lists must be broken into parts. The mail merge also handles labels and envelopes. We rate mail merge very good.

Font support includes the capability to change fonts during the preview process and see them reflected on-screen. Fonts are easily changed and selected and the status line shows the font for the character under the cursor. In addition, fonts changed from the default show up as boldface on the regular screen. The page preview is a nice feature. We rate font support very good.

Professional Write handles graphics clumsily. You can include images from other graphics programs, but only if you first print to a file (employing the same printer you will use for final output) and take a few other steps. You can directly import Harvard Graphics and other SPC file formats. Basically, graphics are inserted by a tag line, and the program makes appropriate white space. (In preview mode, you'll see a gray box.) There is no editing or other management of graphic images. There is a line draw capability. Though tedious, you can bring in other images; we rate graphics handling satisfactory.

Compatibility with other programs is strong, with file translations for many common formats including ASCII, DCA/RFT, Word Perfect, Microsoft Word, Wordstar, Multimate, Wang and other products from the Professional Write family. Professional Write also imports spreadsheet files from Lotus 1-2-3 (WK1), and maintains a warm link to the original spreadsheet file — your document will find and use the latest version of the WK1 file. We rate compatibility very good.

BENCHMARKS

Executive Word Processors

	Professional Write Version 2.2	Aml ¹ Version 1.00A	Beyond Word Writer ¹ Version 1.1
File²			
Load	0:03	0:06	0:01
Save	0:03	0:04	0:01
Import ASCII	0:08	0:13	0:01
Export ASCII	0:03	0:07	0:02
Import DCA/RFT	0:16	N/A ³	0:22
Cursor movement			
Top to bottom	0:02	0:09	<1
Manual scroll	0:29	1:37 ⁴	0:27
Reformat	0:04	0:03	0:01
Search			
Last word	0:03	0:03	0:02
Global replace	1:13	0:05	0:04
Append file	0:03	0:12	0:02

Times are in minutes:seconds; lower numbers indicate better performance.

¹Aml and Beyond Word Writer reviewed in product comparison of Executive Word Processors, August 7, 1989, Page 51.

²File size is approximately 15K.

³Aml does not import DCA/RFT.

⁴Aml's scroll time using arrow keys in layout mode: using the mouse, time was 1:54. Using draft mode, scroll time is significantly faster.

A reasonably speedy performer, Professional Write slows down considerably when doing page preview, even on a 386 with a VGA monitor. Overall, however, this version rates a good score on our speed tests.

DOCUMENTATION:

Documentation consists of a substantial manual that covers most aspects of the program's operations. The explanations are generally good, although a few more examples would clarify some issues. In addition there is a printer booklet with good data about the operation of the various supported printers and a discussion of the peculiarities of laser printers and soft fonts. On-line help is context sensitive and indexed. We rate documentation good.

EASE OF LEARNING:

One of Professional Write's most cherished features is its ease of learning. This

program can be up and running in the amount of time it takes to copy the distribution disks and type "PW" at the prompt. Everything else in the program follows easily. The screen shows an exact replica of the page (although not font spacing), and even margins appear. Menus are self-explanatory, setup issues are easily resolved, and font management is simple. Fifteen minutes will be enough to begin producing business correspondence. Full mastery of the advanced features will take more time. Ease of learning is excellent.

EASE OF USE:

The program remains easy to use. Its simple structure, full menus, and easy movement make most tasks within its purview very easy to accomplish. The macro recorder allows experienced users to automate many tasks and the Address Book allows very simple mail-list operations, so long as they fit within the limitations of a fixed-field, 2,000-record file. We rate ease of use excellent.

ERROR HANDLING:

While Professional Write handles simple errors well, its undo is nothing more than a cut-and-paste buffer that works fine as a one-level undo but does not capture deletions done with the delete key or the backspace key. The program does not have timed backup or automatic backup.

For a general-purpose executive word processor, this is still the leading product.

You are prompted to save upon quitting, and there's a fast-save option as well. We rate error handling satisfactory.

SUPPORT:

Support policies include a 90-day money-back guarantee if bugs in the program prevent you from doing your work. (This is not an unconditional guarantee.) Software Publishing offers unlimited, free telephone support (not toll free). There is a CompuServe BBS. We rate support policies satisfactory.

Technical support proved to be effective in our several calls, with quick response and competent and well-informed answers. We rate technical support satisfactory.

VALUE:

Professional Write, at \$249, has all the basic features in a very neat package. (Upgrading from earlier versions of Professional Write is \$65.) A network version costs \$449 for server and one node; each additional node is \$185.

Professional Write's lack of footnotes may be a problem for some users and the absence of significant graphics may bother others. If you need something to produce multicolumn newsletters, this product won't suffice, but for a general-purpose executive word processor, this is still the leading product. We find it a very good value. □

John Lombardi is president of a major university and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967. Jeff Eckert of the Test Center contributed to this review.

Compaq N Establishes Thin-Profile PC Standard

Network security is prime ingredient for Deskpro 286n, 386n.

BY TIM ZITTEL TEST CENTER
AND TRACEY CAPEN
ASSOCIATE REVIEWS EDITOR

Having established itself as a power in the high-end network file server market, Compaq Computer Corp. has now set its sights on network workstations. The Compaq Deskpro 286n and 386n are relatively low-price, low-profile computers designed for use as stand-alone systems or as diskless network workstations.

Because a number of vendors have recently started shipping thin-profile units similar to the Compaq "n" machines, we have created a new category of PC and adjusted our scoring methods; the number of slots and drive bays required for a satisfactory score has been reduced.

The Deskpro 286n features an Intel 12-MHz 286 microprocessor; the 386n is powered by a 16-MHz 386SX chip. Except for the CPU, the two systems are nearly identical. For that reason, we evaluated only the 386 version, but included the 286n's throughput times in our benchmark chart. Both versions come in three models: the Model 40, with a 40-megabyte hard drive and 1.4-megabyte 3½-inch floppy drive; the Model 1, with a floppy drive, but no hard drive; and the Model 0, with no drives (the diskless workstation). Both systems come standard with 1 megabyte of memory and thin-profile case (only 3.9 inches high).

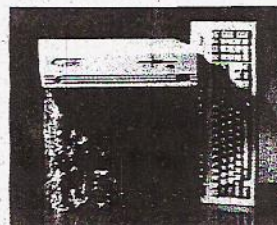
The Deskpro 386n fared well compared to other 16-MHz 386SXs we've reviewed. (See "Penny-Pinching Power," January 15, Page 57, for our latest product comparison of 16-MHz 386SXs.) The 386n's CPU-intensive throughput time of 48 minutes and 2 seconds was about 22 percent slower than the Polywell 386SX (the fastest 16-MHz 386SX we've reviewed), and two seconds faster than the full-size Compaq Deskpro 386s.

In our disk-intensive throughput tests, the Deskpro 386n, with its 40-megabyte Conner drive, turned in the third fastest time. Completing the test in just over 1 hour and 11 minutes, it was only three percent slower than the Everex Step 386is (our 16-MHz 386SX disk-throughput leader).

We had no difficulty running our software compatibility suite on the Deskpro 386n. We were able to switch between Lotus 1-2-3, Release 2.2 and Microsoft Word 5.0 under both Desqview and Windows. We tested Rbase under OS/2 and 1-2-3 2.2 in the OS/2 DOS compatibility box. The only shortcoming of the Deskpro in this category is speed switching. It does not let you switch to a slower processing speed for better compatibility with older software (such as Crosstalk XVI).

The Deskpro 386n was flawless in our hardware compatibility tests. We installed a Hayes 2400B internal modem and a

REPORT CARD INFO WORLD



THIN-PROFILE 386SX ISA COMPUTER
Compaq Deskpro 386n

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
CPU-intensive applications	(100)	Very Good
Disk-intensive applications	(100)	Very Good
Software compatibility	(150)	Very Good
Only one processing speed.		
Hardware compatibility	(125)	Excellent
Expandability	(75)	Satisfactory
Only two expansion slots and no drive bays open after configuration.		
Documentation	(50)	Very Good
Setup	(100)	Very Good
ROM-resident setup; few DIP switches and jumpers.		
Serviceability		
System design	(50)	Very Good
No patches on motherboard; front-panel power switch; flexible network security options.		
Support policies	(50)	Poor
Dealer-only support.		
Technical support	(75)	Good
Score based on reader survey.		
Value	(125)	Good
Relatively expensive.		
Final score		7.1

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Compaq Computer Corp., 20555 State Highway 249, Houston, TX 77070; (713) 370-0670, (800) 231-0900.

List Price: \$4,246 as configured; \$3,199 with standard 1 megabyte of RAM; sold through dealer channels.

Features: 16-MHz 80386SX CPU (less-than-one wait state); VGA adapter built-in; serial, parallel, mouse ports built-in; Intel 80387SX math coprocessor support; 90-watt power supply.

Peripherals: Enhanced keyboard.

Storage and Memory: 40-megabyte Conner hard disk with built-in 1:1 controller; 1.44-megabyte 3½-inch floppy drive; 4 megabytes of 80-nanosecond RAM (proprietary memory modules, 16 megabytes maximum).

Pros: Thin profile; above average CPU and disk speed; network security features.

Cons: Extremely limited expandability; expensive proprietary memory modules.

Summary: Compaq's smallest Deskpro is a capable performer and exceptionally well constructed. It will undoubtedly become the standard in this new category of thin-profile or diskless computers. The only drawbacks are its price and limited expandability.

REPORT CARD INFO WORLD

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSOR

Professional Write

VERSION 2.2

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Basic editing	(125)	Very Good
Spelling checking	(125)	Very Good
Mail merging	(50)	Very Good
Fonts	(100)	Very Good
Graphics	(25)	Satisfactory
Compatibility	(75)	Very Good
Speed	(50)	Good
Documentation	(75)	Good
Ease of learning	(100)	Excellent
Ease of use	(125)	Excellent
Error handling	(75)	Satisfactory
Support		
Support policies	(25)	Satisfactory
Technical support	(25)	Satisfactory
Value	(25)	Very Good
Final score		7.5

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Software Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 7210, 1901 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA 94039; (415) 962-8910.

List Price: \$249. Upgrade from other versions of Professional Write is \$65. Network server plus one node is \$449; additional nodes are \$185 each.

Requires: IBM PC, PS/2, or compatible; 512K RAM (440K free); CGA, EGA, VGA, or Hercules required for preview; hard disk recommended; DOS 2.0 or higher; will run under Windows.

Pros: Easy to learn and use; Address Book good for mail merge; good font handling for Laserjet printers; good grammar checker and readability index; good compatibility with other programs.

Cons: No footnotes, tables of contents; cannot do columns; clumsy graphics.

Summary: Professional Write 2.2 remains a good choice for occasional executive use, the preparation of simple correspondence, or long papers not requiring columns or footnotes. Address Book capability makes it very useful for small businesses that use form letters and automated mailing.