WordPerfect Takes a Powerful Next Step

WordPerfect's professional word processor may bring the Next system into the mainstream.

BY JOHN LOMBARDI REVIEW BOARD

As the Next Computer enters mainstream desktop computing, it requires a professional word processing system. Unix tools won't do, and the included writing program, WriteNow, doesn't measure up to the standards of professional word processors. WordPerfect Corp. has the only product that fits the bill, and WordPerfect for Next is a strong word processor with most of the functionality of the DOS version and a few Next extras.

This review departs somewhat from our normal procedures. *InfoWorld* reviews normally depend on a rigorous comparison of products sharing similar hardware and operating system platforms. However, WordPerfect has no competitors in the Next domain of professional word processing with which to compare. So we've taken as our reference point the current state of the art in PC word processing products: Microsoft Word for Windows, Lotus Ami Pro, or WordStar/NBI Legacy. (For reviews of these products, see product comparison, January 7, Page 51.)

FEATURES:

WordPerfect for Next translates WordPerfect 5.0 to the Next environment. This translation captures most of the important features of the DOS product and makes them easier to use and understand through the Next's graphical operating system. Although not as sophisticated and powerful as Word for Windows or Ami Pro, for example, and missing the extra features included in WordPerfect 5.1 — such as an equation generator, automatic bullets, and tables — WordPerfect for Next offers competitive professional performance.

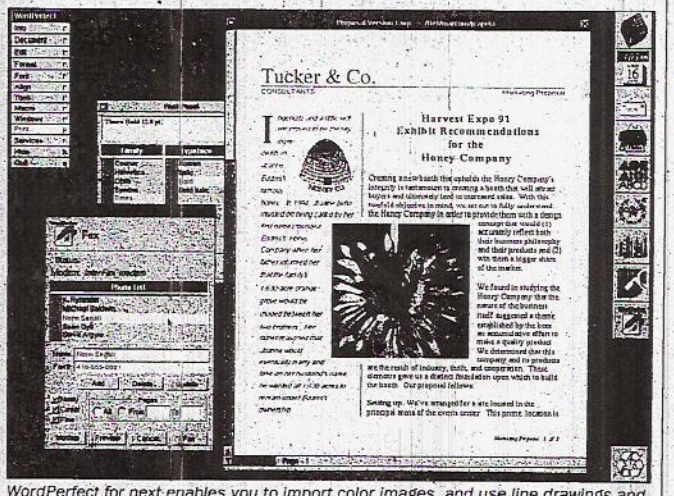
PERFORMANCE:

Basic editing: WordPerfect for Next has all of the basic editing tools that are expected in a first-rate word processing program, with the exception of a rectangular-area cut and paste. WordPerfect Next performs complex search and replace, handles multiple tab types, and will include tab leaders. Auto-hyphenation permits manual verification and adjustment of hyphenation points. WordPerfect Next supports combined documents. In addition, the program will justify text left, right, center, or full. We rate basic editing very good.

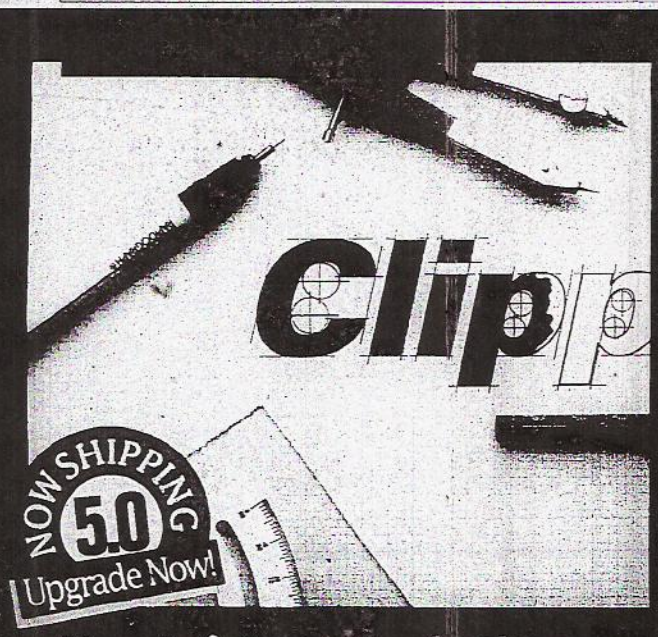
Proofing tools: In addition to dictionaries, WordPerfect Next's proofing tools include a spelling checker that maintains capitalization, a global replace feature, and a thesaurus. There is no grammar checker, but the Next environment includes a very sophisticated thesaurus, a dictionary, with definitions, and a quotation library. This is available to the WordPerfect user through a window and clipboard. These text facilities, while not part of WordPerfect, enhance the tools available to WordPerfect users, so we give the product partial credit for these features. WordPerfect has a minor defect in its spelling checker that does not permit a correction containing a space. If the misspelled word is "wordprocessing" and the correction should be "word processing," the user can't enter the correction without exiting the spelling checker. WordPerfect has acknowledged this problem, and will change it in a future update. We rate proofing tools good.

Mail merge: WordPerfect for Next's mail merge is capable; it handles basic tasks such as using data files imported from WordPerfect DOS, Library, or Next files to produce form letters, mailing lists, and similar documents. In general, this facility mimics the mail merge in WordPerfect 5.0. Sorts can include sophisticated selection criteria that make it easy to create sublists for a standard merge function. Unfortunately, while the sort can handle multiple level sorts, it requires that all levels be either ascending or descending, which is a disadvantage. WordPerfect for Next earns a good rating for its mail merge.

Layout: WordPerfect Next has sophisticated layout features. Layout capabilities include multiple columns, binding margins, WYSIWYG editing in columns, as well as complete ruler and font control. In addition, the program can scale, crop, and rotate graphics imported in the WPG format. There is a line drawing feature, but you can't put a repeating line between columns automatically. There is no table editor or formula editor. The program supports the effective but very complicated WordPerfect DOS math capability. WordPerfect for Next also offers widow and orphan control, vertical justification, and styles. There are also multiple views (25 to 200 percent of actual) to permit WYSIWYG editing in any type style and size. In general, the display of formatting



WordPerfect for next enables you to import color images, and use line drawings and multiple typefaces in one document.



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and proportionally spaced type on-screen is excellent except for fonts displayed small on-screen. These tend to have irregular letterspacing that disappears when the magnification level is increased. You can open a window that shows all formatting tokens, which is equivalent to the RevealCodes window in WordPerfect for DOS. We rate layout excellent.

Style sheets: WordPerfect for Next has basic predefined styles for headers, footers, footnotes, and tables of contents. You can transfer style information from one document to another, and styles can exist independent of documents. We rate style sheets very good.

Font/printer support: WordPerfect for Next uses the Next's required system printer, a 400-dpi PostScript device. WordPerfect uses both its own fonts and Next fonts. It also supports kerning. WordPerfect's font selection procedure is very easy; it uses a dialog box with examples. We compared output to Word for Windows, and we found the WordPerfect for Next results to be crisper. However, the Word for Windows printer was a 300-dpi PostScript printer, so the higher resolution with WordPerfect for Next may account for the clearer output. We rate font/printer support excellent.

Reference tools: Reference tools include auto-numbering and multiple-level outlining. The program supports footnotes and endnotes in the same document, as well as cross references, tables of authorities, indexes, tables of contents, and other lists. WordPerfect for Next also has comments, redlining, and strikeout. We rate reference tools very good.

Import/export: Import and export to platforms other than Next is limited. WordPerfect for Next reads and writes files from WordPerfect, Versions 4.2 through 5.1 for DOS. It converts them exactly into WordPerfect for Next — except for functions from Version 5.1 that are not included in the Next version, such as tables and equations. However, these attributes are preserved and can be resumed under Versions 4.2 through 5.1.

"WordPerfect for Next is relatively easy to learn, especially if you've mastered Next Step."

WordPerfect for Next will handle ASCII and the Microsoft Rich Text Format (RTF). WordPerfect for Next can also export ASCII to DOS platforms. It will read WordPerfect graphic files written in the DOS WPG format.

While we normally do not give high ratings for this level of compatibility, it compares favorably to the cross-platform compatibility found in most Windows products. Compatibility with Next-based word processing products is superb, mostly because there are few relevant Next products. We rate import/export satisfactory.

Networking: The Next machine can share files, hard disks, and directories over a network — for WordPerfect or any other application. (We did not run network-specific tests for this review.) We rate networking excellent.

Speed: Next is an inherently more powerful computer than our standard Windows platform. In general, we found WordPerfect for Next acceptably quick. However, it sometimes needed to go to disk to find some information — help screens, for example — which delayed response time. Graphics response was quick, reformatting fast, and saving reasonable. We rate speed good.

Macros: WordPerfect for Next has keystroke macros that include the commands from the WordPerfect command set. Macros can be assigned to various key combinations, and the program includes a macro editor. This version lacks programming constructs such as If, Then, Else or Do Until, which are available in WordPerfect DOS 5.1 and most of the Windows products in the Word for Windows class. We rate macros satisfactory.

DOCUMENTATION:

As is the practice with Next, all WordPerfect documentation exists on-line. Although it is reasonably comprehensive and readily available, we didn't find it as complete or as easy to use as the traditional loose-leaf WordPerfect reference manual. On-line documentation works best when you understand the product but need information on the details of a feature. It works less well when used by novices who are unfamiliar with the general product category. The on-line help is not context sensitive. We rate documentation satisfactory.

EASE OF LEARNING:

WordPerfect for Next is relatively easy to learn, especially if you have already mastered the conventions of the Next Step operating environment. Most functions are easy to follow; the on-line documentation contains most of what's needed, and the dialog boxes are self-explanatory. The

REPORT CARD — **INFO WORLD**

OFFICE/PROFESSIONAL WORD PROCESSOR

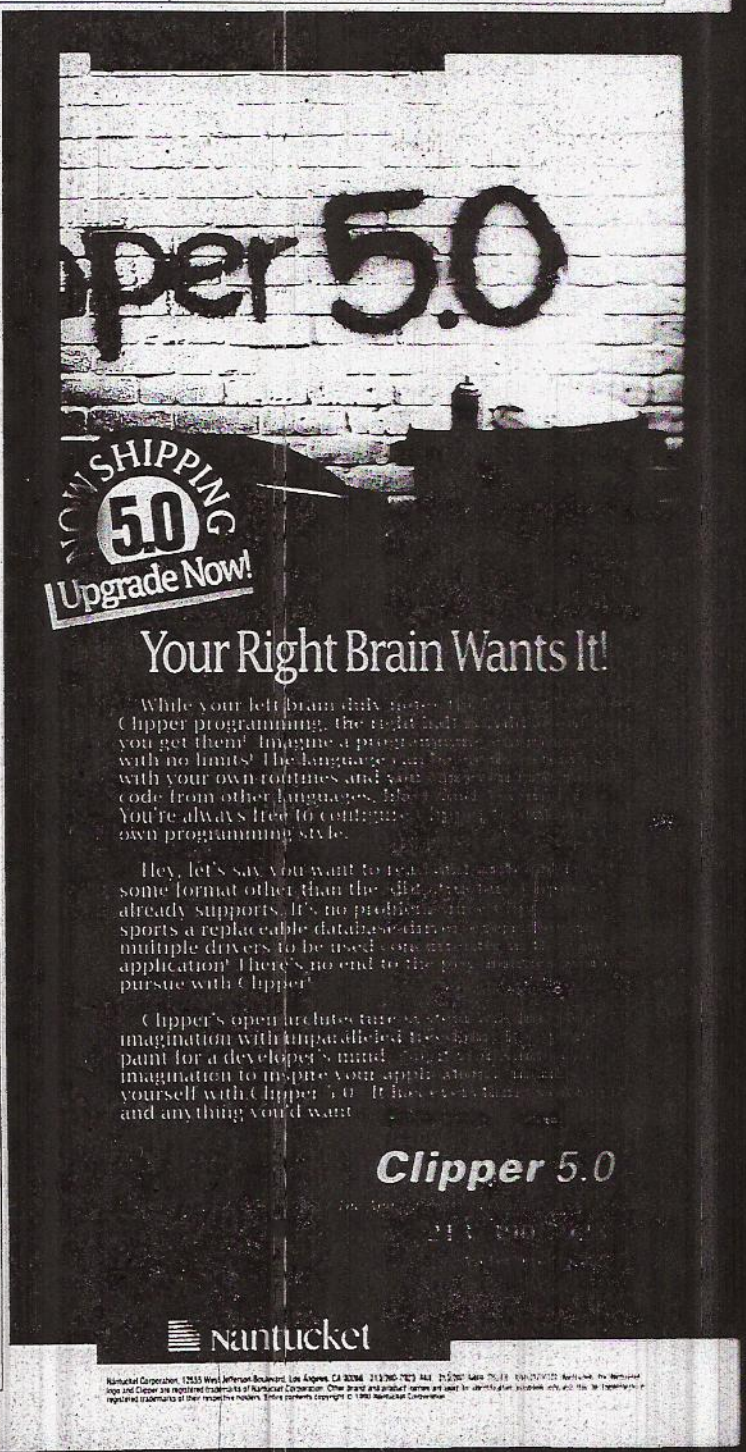
WordPerfect for Next

VERSION 1.0.1

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Basic editing	(80)	Very Good
Proofing tools	(80)	Good
Mail merge	(50)	Good
Layout	(50)	Excellent
Style sheets	(50)	Very Good
Font/printer support	(50)	Excellent
Reference tools	(50)	Very Good
Import/export	(50)	Satisfactory
Networking	(50)	Excellent
Speed	(50)	Good
Macros	(30)	Satisfactory
Documentation	(75)	Satisfactory
Ease of learning	(75)	Good
Ease of use	(130)	Very Good
Error handling	(40)	Satisfactory
Support		
Support policies	(20)	Good
Technical support	(20)	Very Good
Value	(50)	Very Good
Final score		**7.0**

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: WordPerfect Corp., 1555 N. Technology Way, Orem, UT 84057; (801) 222-5000.
List price: $495.
Requires: Next computer and supported PostScript printer; Version 2.0 or later of Next Step operating system.
Pros: Excellent layout capabilities; fine graphics; strong editing; easy to learn and use; excellent sort; multiple indexes and lists; tables of authorities; and both endnotes and footnotes.
Cons: Macros lack programming; mail merge lacks conditionals; spelling checker won't handle embedded blanks; no equation editor; documentation only available on-line.
Summary: A strong professional word processing program for the Next computer, WordPerfect translates DOS 5.0-level functionality to the Next Step GUI. For Next users this is a strong product that works well with other Next utilities, especially the dictionary, thesaurus, and quotation library.



book of sample lessons serves as a tutorial to many WordPerfect functions, but the on-line documentation lacks adequate examples. We rate ease of learning good.

EASE OF USE:
Once you are familiar with the operating system and WordPerfect itself, the program becomes quite easy to use. Its macro facility permits keystroke customization. The math facility remains difficult to use, however, and the absence of programmable macros detracts some. We rate ease of use very good.

ERROR HANDLING:
Error handling appears to be reasonably strong. There is an undo that accumulates deletions as long as the insertion point isn't moved, which is essentially a one-level undo. Although the system prompts you before exiting an unsaved file, the profusion of windows and boxes can lead the inexperienced user to lose a file. There is also a timed backup feature. We rate error handling satisfactory.

SUPPORT:
Support policies: WordPerfect offers unlimited free, but not toll-free, technical support. Support hours are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mountain time, Monday through Friday. Fax support is also available. We rate support policies good.

Technical support: The technical support staff responded promptly and expertly when we called. WordPerfect for Next has its own support line. We rate WordPerfect's technical support very good.

VALUE:
Relative to other Next word processing products — of which there are few, and none directly competitive — WordPerfect is a strong value at $495. It's not quite as good as the best of the Windows products, nor as powerful as the most recent edition of WordPerfect for DOS, but within the Next context it is a fine product. WordPerfect for Next is 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.

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