REVIEWS

Lotus leads word processing revolution

Ami Pro, Version 2.0 poses challenge to Word for Windows and WordPerfect for Windows.

BY JOHN LOMBARDI REVIEW BOARD

And the beat goes on. Big, powerful, fancy, elegant, flexible, and complex, microcomputer word processing continues to push the limits of standard hardware and to test the brain power of users. Lotus' Ami Pro, Version 2.0 challenges Microsoft Word for Windows with a new version that has an impressive collection of capabilities and flexibilities. The price of these new features is complexity and sometimes confusion. You can do almost anything you can imagine with this program, but you'll need lots of time to explore its many features and options.

This review is based on criteria from our last comparison of professional word processors (January 7, page 69).
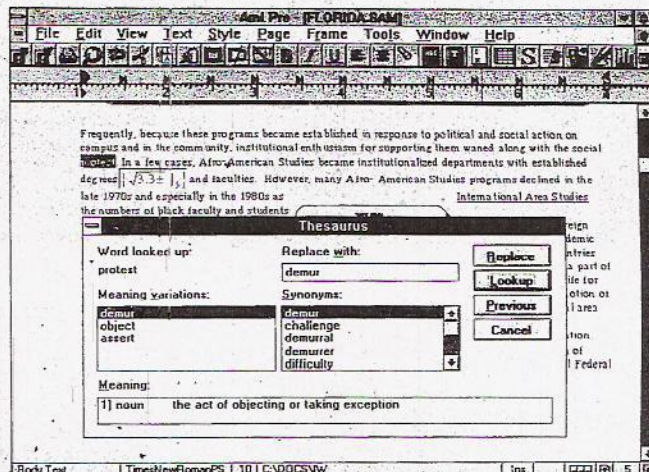
FEATURES:

Ami Pro 2.0 takes graphical word processing to a new level of power and flexibility. It has all of the standard word processing capabilities, and it offers an endless series of special features and provides an inexhaustible supply of views, preferences, editing styles, and user customizing options. Although Ami Pro has invented nothing particularly new or different for word processing or Windows programs, it has almost everything invented packed into a WYSIWYG package. Ami Pro can do almost everything quickly, sometimes easily, but always with multiple options.

PERFORMANCE:

Basic editing: Basic editing with Ami Pro is anything but basic. You can have multiple columns of differing widths and different gutter sizes, and you can have them balanced or unbalanced. If you want paragraphs to carry different justification and formatting, you need only to apply one of the many predefined paragraph styles or create your own variants. Search and replace will handle wild cards, keep caps, or change them as you like.

Unfortunately, Ami Pro will not underline the space created by tabs, although it will underline manually inserted spaces. Ami Pro has time and date stamping in various formats and will handle the revision marking of redlining and strikeouts. Tabs include left, right, center, and decimal versions, and you can

Ami Pro has extensive proofing tools, and the thesaurus includes synonyms, parts of speech, and definitions.

use tabbed columns if you don't want to bother with a table. Hyphenation options include setting the hot zone and the use of manually inserted hyphenation points. You can have several open documents in up to nine different windows, all editable, and you can have the same document open in two windows. Lest you think this program is perfect, Ami still lacks an area cut and paste. With its complement of capabilities, we rate basic editing very good.

Proofing tools: Ami Pro 2.0's proofing tools include the usual thesaurus and spelling checker. The thesaurus contains synonyms, parts of speech, and definitions. You can get foreign language dictionaries for an extra $50 each. If you enter a correction, the speller checks the correction also. Replacing maintains capitalization and punctuation. You can send in your registration card and receive a copy of Grammatik for just the shipping and handling charges. If you install Grammatik, it will appear in your pulldown menu and run directly from Ami Pro. We rate proofing tools excellent.

Mail merge: Mail merge in Ami Pro 2.0 has variables, comparison operators, and access to the powerful macro language. You can do labels easily, and the program skips bad records without a hitch. In addition, Ami produces lists, and it handles form letters. The program automatically formats the finished form letter according to the applied paragraph style. Mail merge will accept data files from common database formats. You can include graphics in merged documents, tables, and other Ami objects. We rate mail merge very good.

Layout: As you might expect, Ami Pro 2.0 supports an endless series of layout options and tools. All information about the document's layout and format is saved with the document. You may, however, extract the layout information into a separate style and save it with included contents. Graphic capabilities include everything you would expect from a strong graphics utility. You can import most known graphic formats. You can scale and crop, rotate and reverse, fit into a frame or maintain aspect ratio, adjust gray scales, edit, add text, draw lines, fill shapes, and do free-form drawing.

You can edit in a variety of modes that display the text large or small, one page per screen, using WYSIWYG fonts. There is a facing-page display that is uneditable. The screen can be customized to show margins, including boundaries, show returns and paragraph marks, display icons, and show rulers. Formula editing takes place in a special window

BENCHMARKS   INFO WORLD

Windows Word Processors

	Lotus Ami Pro Version 2.0	NBI Legacy[1] Version 1.0	Microsoft Word for Windows[1] Version 1.1
File operations/simple file			
Open	0:04	0:06	0:02
Save	0:02	0:04	0:02
Export ASCII	0:03	0:04	0:03
Import ASCII	0:05	0:08	0:02
Import WordPerfect 5.0	0:16	0:13	0:17
File operations/complex file			
Open	0:08	0:09	0:03
Save	0:02	0:08	0:02
Print	6:32	10:22	6:11
Search tools/simple file			
Search	0:03	0:05	0:01
Global search/replace	0:01	0:04	0:03
Search tools/complex file			
Search	0:01	0:03	<0:01
Global search/replace	0:02	0:04	0:03
Editing tasks/simple file			
Reformat	0:01	0:01	0:06
Jump to end	<0:01	0:03	<0:01
Editing tasks/complex file			
Reformat	0:02	0:04	0:04
Jump to end	<0:01	0:03	<0:01

Times are in minutes:seconds.
[1] Reviewed January 7, page 69.
[2] File size is approximately 50K, 17 pages.
[3] The first time is using the keyboard, the second time is using the mouse.

INSIDE REVIEWS

where a sequence of icons offers symbols, shapes, and other elements of a complex mathematical or scientific formula. Font and margins allow multiple, indeed almost infinite, changes in one document. The program supports frames, which are special boxes treated as mini documents within a document. Frames are powerful layout tools for Ami Pro and permit an endless variety of special effects. They can have borders of various weights and shadings with rounded or sharp corners.

REPORT CARD — INFO WORLD

OFFICE PROFESSIONAL WORD PROCESSOR

Ami Pro
VERSION 2.0

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Basic editing	(80)	Very Good
Proofing tools	(80)	Excellent
Mail merge	(50)	Very Good
Layout	(50)	Excellent
Style sheets	(50)	Excellent
Font/printer support	(50)	Excellent
Reference tools	(50)	Excellent
Import/export	(50)	Very Good
Networking	(50)	Very Good
Speed	(50)	Very Good
Macros	(30)	Excellent
Documentation	(75)	Good
Ease of learning	(75)	Good
Ease of use	(130)	Excellent
Error handling	(40)	Good
Support		
Support policies	(20)	Very Good
Technical support	(20)	Satisfactory
Value	(50)	Excellent
Final score		**8.4**

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Lotus Development Corp., Word Processing Division, 5600 Glenridge Drive, Atlanta, GA 30342; (404) 256-2272, (404) 851-0007.
List price: $495.
Requires: Intel 286 or compatible (386 recommended), with 1 megabyte of RAM (2 megabytes recommended); DOS 3.0 or higher; Windows 3.0; 8 megabytes of disk space; EGA or better; mouse recommended.
Pros: Superior macros, frames, tables, graphics, outlining, sorting, editing, mail merge; WYSIWYG interface makes preparation of complex documents easy; automates most complex document-processing tasks.
Cons: No cross-references in text; handles only single indexes or tables of contents; can't do tables of authorities or cut, paste rectangular or column text; macro documentation costs extra; requires large disk space, lots of memory; operates slowly on low-end hardware.
Summary: Ami Pro 2.0 raises the ante on Windows word processing. For users with complex word publishing or elaborate formatting requirements, Ami Pro 2.0 is now the program to beat.

We rate layout excellent.

Style sheets: Ami Pro also has a superb set of style sheet tools. You can use the extensive style library supplied with the program that includes bullets, labels, outlines, and newsletters, in addition to others. You can modify styles and have them stay with the document but not become permanently attached to that style sheet. In addition, you can permanently modify a style. You can create styles from the formatting of an existing document, or you can create a completely new style. Ami applies styles to paragraphs, and special style features handle table layout requirements for columns and rows. We rate style sheets excellent.

Font and printer support: Fonts equal whatever the printer can deliver, and with the included Adobe Type Manager, screen fonts reproduce exactly what will appear on the printed page. Ami Pro 2.0 handles all fonts and printers available under Windows 3.0. Ami Pro 2.0 has excellent printer and font performance.
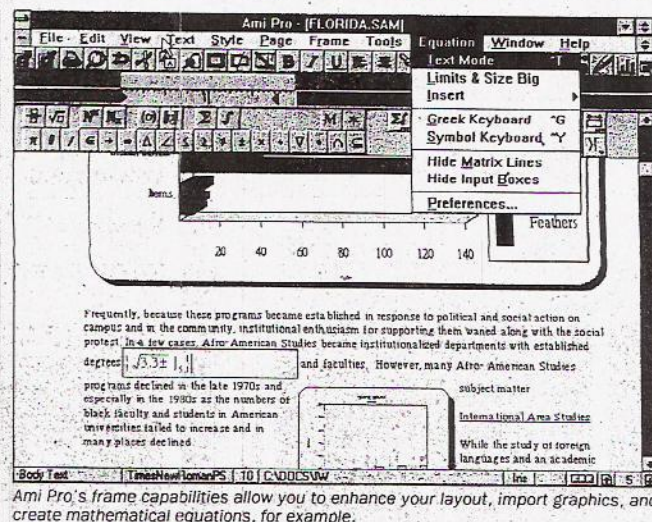
Reference tools: Ami Pro's reference tools include sophisticated outlining based on paragraph styles, in addition to a large set of numbering options. You can collapse or expand outlines. Footnote numbering is updated when deleting or adding footnotes. However, Ami Pro does not permit both footnotes and endnotes in the same document. However, you can insert notes or nonprinting comments that will carry the initials of the user making the note. These notes also can be printed with the document. The table of contents feature permits several levels and will work across multiple files for one document. Similarly, the index can include cross references and will work with multifile documents. However, you can have only one table of contents and one index per document. We rate reference tools excellent.

Import/export: Import/export includes almost every known word processing and graphic file format provided with its own filter. We didn't test each filter, but we did have problems printing an imported WordPerfect file. This may have been due to ATM or something in the file. You can import and export most file formats and graphics formats. Ami Pro 2.0 supports both DDE and OLE linking mechanisms for complex linking of applications. With this, you can insert the results of activities in another program, such as a spreadsheet, and expect them to be updated whenever the underlying spreadsheet changes. We rate import/export very good.

Networking: Ami Pro's file-sharing options allows a second user to read an open file. You can open and edit the first user's original version, but you can save the file only under a different name. Spelling dictionaries and style sheets can be saved in the user's home directory or globally. Ami Pro includes OLE and DDE linking, Lotus Notes and cc:Mail. We rate networking very good.

Speed: Ami Pro performed well in our benchmark tests and compared favorably with Word for Windows. In its overall operation, Ami may feel a bit sluggish. However, the amount of free space on your hard drive may influence how quickly Ami Pro responds. We rate speed very good.

Macros: A distinguishing characteristic of this generation of word processing programs comes from the macro languages included. Word for Windows and Ami Pro 2.0, for example, both have full programming languages as part of their macro facility. Ami Pro's macros do

Ami Pro's frame capabilities allow you to enhance your layout, import graphics, and create mathematical equations, for example.

simple things, such as record keystrokes and play them back, but they can perform complex operations to process words and documents automatically or with user input. The result can be a sophisticated data entry or forms processing capability. Beyond a superb macro programming language, Ami Pro 2.0 has a dialog editor that creates custom dialog boxes that run within Ami and can offer users menus, buttons, selections, and branch decisions. We rate macros excellent.

DOCUMENTATION:

Documentation comes in a large user manual with explanations of the program's features arranged by category with a complete index. The documentation also includes booklets for installation, the Adobe Type Manager, style sheets, and a tutorial. There is extensive on-line help, although not always in context. There is also a quick-reference card.

The macro programming language and the dialog box editor have no printed documentation, but there is complete on-line documentation and help. You can get the printed version of the macro manual by filling out a special order card that come with the program and paying the shipping and handling charges ($9.95). We rate documentation good.

EASE OF LEARNING:

Ami Pro 2.0 is no picnic to learn. A novice can easily produce a solid, clean document from the installed version of the program without any involvement with Ami's special features, but even the most elementary foray into Ami menus, options, and alternatives can leave a word processing neophyte lost. Expert users will need to study some of the implementations of complex features to be able to understand how to use them for the first time. The tutorial and documentation help make the product accessible; even so, it's tough going beyond the most elementary encounter. Ami Pro has an annoying requirement that each time you select a menu choice, the menu disappears even when you might want to select more than one choice. We rate ease of learning good.

EASE OF USE:

If Ami Pro 2.0 is a chore to learn, it's a breeze to use. That is partly because you can invent many special icons for fre-

quently used processes and actions, eliminating the use of menu sequences. Ami Pro also has a button bar at the bottom of your window that allows you to change attributes such as font, size and styles. The tremendous number of customization options and user-modifiable functions lets you tailor a version of Ami Pro to your exotic preferences. The macro facility contributes substantially to its efficiency. The more complex and repetitive a word processing task, the more valuable Ami Pro's features become. We rate ease of use excellent.

ERROR HANDLING:

Ami Pro handles errors with aplomb. It has timed-save options and prompts to save files. It's relatively difficult to lose data. There is a multiple-level undo available (you can set whether it will undo from one to four deletions or other commands). However, if you have auto save, the undo works only until the next save operation, when the undo is erased. If you fail to name the backup directory differently from your document directory, Ami will unwittingly save your backup file on top of your original file, thus erasing it. We rate error handling good.

SUPPORT:

Support policies: Lotus' word processing division offers free, but not toll-free, unlimited technical support from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. In addition, there is BBS support via CompuServe, fax support, and corporate extended-support policies. Support policies are very good.

Technical support: Lotus technical support is overloaded with calls, and the wait is made longer by irritating messages that interrupt the music. When you get through, the help is effective and well informed. We rate technical support satisfactory.

VALUE:

Ami Pro 2.0 is head and shoulders above the competition, although other vendors are progressing rapidly with their new or improved Windows word processors. Ami Pro 2.0's power and flexibility, combined with its ease of use, makes it a fine product that can meet almost any word processing need. At $495, within the Windows word processing environment, Ami Pro 2.0 is an excellent value. □