WordStar for Windows excels at frame-based tasks

Word processor is less suited to complex editing, long documents

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WordStar's flagship Windows word processor offers a few refinements and improved performance in its recent upgrade to Version 1.5. WordStar for Windows now includes Object Linking and Embedding capabilities, enhanced graphic import facilities, and support for Windows 3.1 features, including TrueType. WordStar for Windows remains an effective frame-based product that is quite capable for documents that require extensive formatting, but the package still lacks many of the features available in state-of-the-art programs such as Lotus' Ami Pro or Microsoft Word for Windows. This review is based on criteria that we established in our last comparison of Windows professional word processors. (See February 10, page 78.)

PERFORMANCE:

Basic editing: As an editing tool, WordStar for Windows performs well, though there have been no significant improvements over Version 1.0. You can handle most editing needs with WordStar's solid features list. There are general search-and-replace tools and redefinable tabs with left, right, center, and decimal options, and tab leader characters. You have the ability to center or justify paragraphs, and there is an optional automatic or manual hyphenation capability. You can remove automatic hyphens by finding and replacing the hyphen tags.
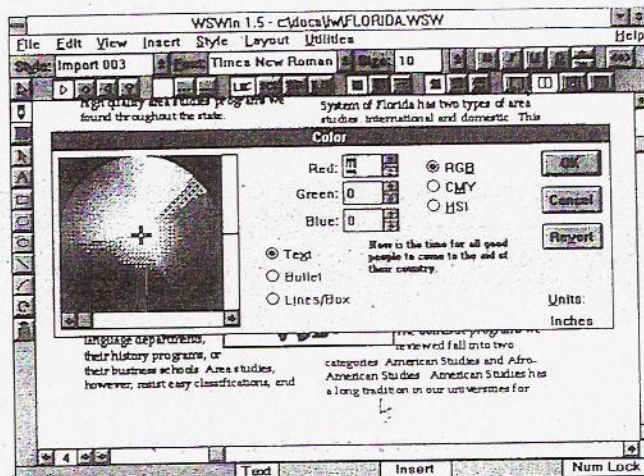
WordStar's search and replace will find items in frames (except for graphic and table frames), and it will find formatting done with tags.

Formatting can be done in two ways — through either tags or styles. Tags format specific sections of text by turning on or off attributes such as character size, font, and alignment. Tag formatting takes precedence over the formatting included in a style.

WordStar for Windows still lacks an area cut and paste command and an automatic case change command. (You can change case through a workaround keystroke combination.) The editing tools do not include the capability to enter fields for file name, date, time, and other information. The editing capabilities are not as intuitive as those in Ami Pro and Word for Windows, but once you learn how to manipulate around the package, you can edit with relative ease. We rate basic editing good.

Proofing tools: WordStar for Windows 1.5 includes a spelling checker, a thesaurus, and a grammar checker that is an add-in of Correct Grammar for Windows 2.0 — the latest version. You can choose to install Correct Grammar so that it appears in one of WordStar's pull-down menus or in Windows Program Manager's File menu so you can use Correct Grammar with all of your other Windows applications via the clipboard.

The spelling checker works fine, offering parts of speech and definitions, and the thesaurus offers synonyms, near synonyms, antonyms, near antonyms, and see-also references. You can start and

WordStar for Windows, Version 1.5 has the capability to adjust the color and intensity of graphic objects and text.

stop a spelling check anywhere in your document, but you cannot backtrack and resume checking, nor can you check a defined block of text. The speller permits one user dictionary at any one time. You cannot perform global replaces with the spelling checker, but it does put the most recent replacement first in the list of suggested alternatives.

Correct Grammar works as expected, although the program works best on documents that are less than 64K. If your document exceeds 64K, Correct Grammar recommends checking it in pieces, which can be tedious. We rate proofing tools good.

Layout: WordStar for Windows 1.5

> ## WordStar supports a host of frame-based tools, so you can achieve complex layout effects relatively easily.

excels in layout capabilities. Each page is a frame, and the program supports a host of frame-based tools, so you can achieve complex layout effects relatively easily. WordStar supports story lines through linked frames, and you can put multiple frames on a page. You can make frames transparent or opaque, and they can overlap. WordStar for Windows Version 1.5 has strong tools for multiple columns, including column balancing. It handles all varieties of margins, operates in WYSIWYG, and offers a full-page view. WordStar has capabilities for special effects, such as shading, printing pages in different orientations (portrait and landscape) in the same document, and widow and orphan controls. Pagination is automatic, but there

is an option to turn pagination off and work only with frames.

WordStar for Windows also has static and floating graphics frames, supports simple line drawing and geometric shapes, and will handle multiple overlapping graphics frames. You can rotate graphics objects, adjust their color and intensity, and select a fill pattern. Graphics and text frames take borders that can have square or rounded corners with various line weights. Headers and footers exist as separate frames and float until you create a new header or footer frame. WordStar also supports guide words that use text from a page as part of the header. The math features that WordStar lacks are an equation composer and math facilities. We rate layout very good.

Mail merge: WordStar's mail merge capabilities remain unchanged from Version 1.0. The mail merge for form letters and mailing lists offers adequate facilities but lacks the sophistication of other products. Although merge will take files from other programs and has considerable flexibility with field and record delimiters, WordStar for Windows 1.5 won't handle any conditions for producing even minimally complex form letters. The program has no help for setting up mailing labels. If you encounter a bad record with WordStar 1.5, you will get an error message and the merge will quit. You can't skip bad records and keep going. We rate mail merge satisfactory.

Style sheets: WordStar's style capabilities include all of the layout characteristics of a paragraph, including rulers, margins, indents, fonts, character enhancements, columns, and the like. Styles exist independently of the document for application to paragraphs, and styles applied in an individual document remain with that document. You can make styles by example, and there is a style preview. As mentioned earlier, WordStar also uses formatting tags that can take precedence over a style. If a formatting tag exists or you add one, the

tag always supersedes the instructions in a style. WordStar has the capability to find and replace (or eliminate) these tags as well as the styles themselves. We rate style sheets very good.

Font and printer support: WordStar handles printers and fonts well. You can use all the Hewlett-Packard fonts and PostScript scalable fonts, although you cannot select extremely large and small sizes (4 points or 127 points, for example) from the menu bar. You will have to enter those numbers manually. You can print your pages in reverse order. The program supports the Adobe Type Manager fonts and the Windows True-Type fonts, but it no longer ships with Bitstream fonts. WordStar has capabilities for leading, kerning, and tracking or letter spacing. You can easily include drop caps. WordStar's font and printer handling has improved with the addition of support for Windows 3.1 TrueType fonts. We rate font and printer support very good.

Reference tools: Although WordStar doesn't have full outlining capabilities, it does support numbering paragraphs and subcategories within the table of contents and indexes. The program cannot number lines. Footnotes normally appear at the bottom of the page, but you can opt to gather footnotes at the end of a storyline. When using this option, you can't see the footnotes except in draft form, in the middle of the text, between footnote tags. WordStar supports backward and forward references in the notes and the index, and you can customize the footnote format.

WordStar will sort index entries, but you cannot sort other text or data in the program. Indexes and tables of contents exist as files stored separately from the document that must be printed separately or imported into the document for final formatting and printing. You can have up to 15 separate lists that are limited to entries of no more than 150 bytes, including tags. We rate reference tools very good.

Import and export: With WordStar 1.5, you can import or export an endless series of formats for text and graphics. WordStar has two forms of importing: One is a document conversion that brings in all styles that can be converted and gives them a sequentially numbered name; the other form imports text without styles.

Import and export formats also include a large series of graphics formats that match and exceed almost any other program we've tested. We did find that EPS files without image information at the front of the file generate an error and will not load. WordStar for Windows 1.5 will keep this EPS file open and in memory, and you must close the program and restart it to be able to access the EPS file again. We used an EPS graphics file from the previous version of the program for our benchmarks.

A comprehensive README file describes a variety of difficulties likely to be encountered in the import or export of the various file types in which features from the external format have no counterpart in WordStar. We rate import and export very good.

Networking: WordStar for Windows has little support for network operations. You can open an already open file as read-only, but you cannot edit or make changes and save the file under a different name. There is no license control, though WordStar will print well into network queues. There have been no changes from Version 1.0. We rate network capabilities poor.

Speed: For our simple document, WordStar 1.5 is about the same speed, but a little slower, than Version 1.0. The complex document times are much slower than those of Word for Windows, which was a top performer. We rate speed satisfactory.
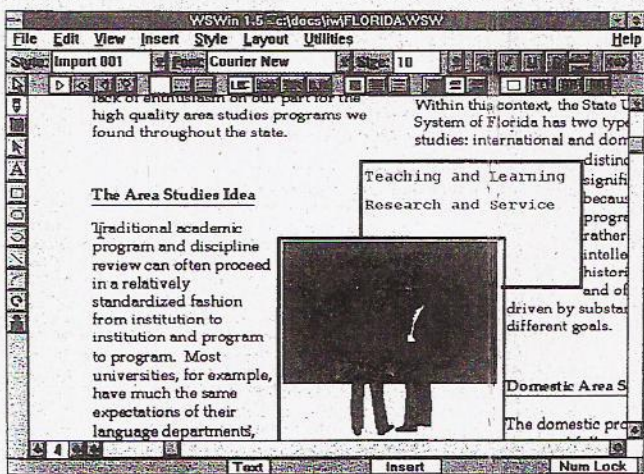
Macros: WordStar for Windows 1.5 has no macro capabilities at all. We rate macros unacceptable.

DOCUMENTATION:

WordStar has combined its two smaller manuals from Version 1.0 into a single large users' guide. This manual is elegantly printed and contains a fine index. The package also includes the same quick-reference booklet that was included with the previous version, and there is a booklet included from Correct Gram-mar explaining that add-in program. WordStar contains the usual Windows-compliant on-line help, and the on-line tutorial has been improved in this version. The error messages are generally helpful. We rate documentation very good.

EASE OF LEARNING:

WordStar, Version 1.5 is relatively easy to learn. We found the frame-based system effective and intuitive and the application and management of styles easy as well. There is ample on-line documentation and a capability to transfer keystrokes from WordStar for DOS or WordStar 2000, which eases learning. The on-line tutorial is also a very useful supplement for new users. We rate ease of learning very good.

EASE OF USE:

A combination of customizable toolbars, multiple keyboard accelerators, alternative keyboards for WordStar for DOS and WordStar 2000 users, and other enhancements make Version 1.5 quite easy for experienced users. You can modify the view, zoom, and contract, and you can use a draft mode. There are guidelines, and the screen will show facing pages in an editable form. You can assign styles to unused function keys to use alone or with shift or control keys.

However, the absence of macros, the incapability to customize the keyboard accelerators, and the limitation of showing only one document at a time reduces WordStar for Windows' effectiveness. The 64K file size limit on Correct Grammar inhibits effective use of this product for major writing projects. We

rate ease of use good.

SUPPORT:

Support policies: WordStar offers free but not toll-free, technical support from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, Pacific time, but support closes at 4 p.m. on Wednesday. In addition WordStar offers BBS support via CompuServe and fax support. Support policies are good.

Technical support: Our calls to WordStar produced clear, informed answers with only a short waiting time on hold. We rate technical support very good.

VALUE:

As an introductory offer, WordStar for Windows is discounting its normal $495 price to $119 until the end of the year. You can upgrade from WordStar for Windows, Version 1.0 for $29.95. Version 1.5 has fewer features and capabilities than other programs listed at $495 but more than most programs listed in the $120 range. At its list price of $495, we rate WordStar for Windows as a good value.

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

Windows professional word processors

	WordStar for Windows Version 1.5	WordStar for Windows Version 1.0	Microsoft Word for Windows[1] Version 2.1
File operations/simple file			
Open	0:08	0:07	0:03
Save	0:04	0:04	0:02
Print to HP LaserJet	1:18	1:41	1:33
Import WordPerfect 5.1 DOS	0:21	0:11	0:14
File operations/complex file			
Open	0:15	NA[2]	0:03
Save	0:08	NA[2]	0:04
Print preview	0:06	NA[2]	0:17
Print to QMS-PS 810	5:47	NA[2]	5:23
Search tools/simple file			
Reorder chapters	1:08	1:01	0:49
Global search/replace	0:11	0:08	0:02
Search tools/complex file			
Search for last word	0:04	NA	<1
Global search/replace	0:23	NA[2]	0:02
Editing tasks/simple file			
Alter margin and repaginate	0:02	0:01	0:02
Change base font and repaginate	0:02	0:02	0:02
Jump to bottom	0:02	0:03	<1
Generate table of contents	0:51	0:28	1:14
Editing tasks/complex file			
Reformat and repaginate (font)	0:04	NA[2]	0:02
Jump to bottom	0:04	NA[2]	<1
Cut and paste	0:20	NA[2]	0:09
Layout tasks/complex file			
Place PCX file	0:23[3]	NA[2]	0:07
Place EPS file	NA[4]	0:05	0:05

Times are in minutes:seconds.
[1] Reviewed February 10, page 78.
[2] WordStar for Windows 1.0 could not print a PCX and an EPS file in the same document.
[3] We had to draw a frame before we could place the PCX file.
[4] We could not import an EPS file with image information at the top of the file.

WordStar's strong frame capabilities make this a fine product for producing layout-intensive documents.