

## REVIEWS

# Ami Pro 3.0: leader in word processor race

Updated Windows package earns points for drag-and-drop editing, flexible formatting

BY JOHN LOMBARDI  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**L**otus Ami Pro and Microsoft Word for Windows fight the bitter battle of the high-powered Windows word processors. This round goes, on points, to Ami Pro. Version 3.0. Filled with bells and whistles, convenience features, and fancy options, this upgrade of Ami Pro moves from scoring just behind to scoring just ahead of Word for Windows, although not by enough of a margin for a technical knockout. Version 3.0's new features raise the ante for sophisticated display, flexible formatting, and graphics performance.

This review is based on criteria established in our last product comparison of Windows word processors (February 10, page 78).

## PERFORMANCE:

**Basic editing:** Ami Pro now has drag-and-drop editing, in which you highlight a passage, click on it, drag the pointer to a new location, and release it, dropping the selected text into the new place. This feature is quite nifty and easily a match for the similar feature that we first saw in Word for Windows. Ami Pro's basic editing capabilities remain strong in its other areas: There are all of the justification options, and tabs can have dot, dash, and underlined leaders, but the program still does not support user-defined leaders. The search-and-replace capabilities are complete, including searching text, frames, tables, and notes. You can search and replace with wild cards, formatting, within a selection, and keep capitalization. Ami Pro still lacks a column or area cut-and-paste function for text or tabbed columns.

There is an automatic change-case function. In addition, flexible hyphenation options let you decide whether to split the last word in a paragraph or column. You can manually insert a hyphenation character or insert a nonbreaking space, as well as set the automatic hyphenation zone.

You can link documents, and Ami Pro supports master documents so you can easily edit, index, and generate tables of contents for multilevel documents. Ami Pro also has a sophisticated bullet capability that works through style sheets. We rate basic editing excellent.

**Proofing tools:** Ami Pro 3.0 enhances the facilities by adding a grammar checker to the existing spelling checker and thesaurus. We found that the suggestions for the spelling checker were not as extensive as in Word for Windows, and there is no capability to check entered corrections. You can start or stop anywhere in your document, and you can check materials in headers, footers, frames, and the like. You can have an editable user dictionary, and you can have the spelling checker access the user dictionary when seeking alternative spellings. Ami Pro supports more

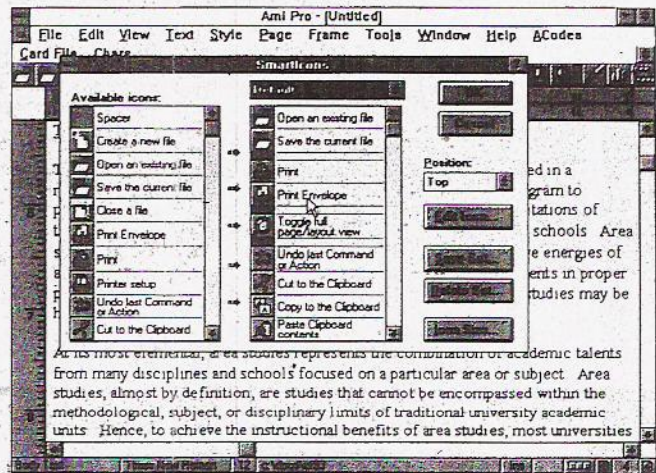
than a dozen foreign dictionaries, which list for \$79. The thesaurus offers synonyms, parts of speech, and short definitions, but it lacks antonyms. The grammar checker includes explanations and a full set of readability statistics. You can modify the rule sets or use preselected groups of rules for business, formal, informal, and other styles. We think Ami Pro's spell checker is a bit less effective; the grammar checker is about the same, and the thesaurus is about the same as the equivalent Word for Windows tools. We rate these very good.

**Layout:** Version 3.0 of Ami Pro contains just about everything you could imagine for word processing layout control. In addition to gracefully handling multiple columns and column balancing, Ami Pro supports columns of different width and uneven gutters. You can change the column layout within the same document, and you can add a gutter line automatically. You have complete control over the margins, and the program edits with precise WYSIWYG. Consequently, you can always see exactly where things will appear on the page.

Extensive graphics capabilities include a bit map editor for the icons, scaling and cropping, elaborate smoothing, and gray-scale manipulation. Ami Pro ships with drawing tools that include auto-line, shapes, objects, fill, snap-to, and the capability to group and ungroup objects. You can use color and rotate or flip the image.

The program supports a Table function with line and color options. You can format individual cells, perform math by cells, include footnotes, use tabs within cells, and use the data in tables for charts. The Table function will accept Lotus 1-2-3 and Microsoft Excel formulas and notation for simple formulas, references, and math. You can also include pictures, equations, drawings, and charts in cells that do not contain data. Using Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) and Object Linking and Embedding (OLE), you can link tables to data in spreadsheets such as 1-2-3 and Excel.

Along with tables, Ami Pro's layout features will handle frames that can be as large as one page. You cannot flow text from one frame to another to create a story line, but you can group frames, make them transparent or opaque, and bring them to the front or send them to the back. Frames can be anchored to a precise spot on the page or floated with a paragraph. Text will flow around all sides of the frame, and you can repeat a frame on all pages. Within a frame, you can place a graphic, columns, tables, text, or even run a macro. Ami Pro emphasizes its WYSIWYG editing capability, correctly asserting that in its most precise mode—the Layout mode—it will show the text exactly as it will appear on screen. Word for Windows, depending on the typeface and size, may allow lines to run over the right margin on-screen, although they break on-



Ami Pro 3.0 contains Lotus' SmartIcons, which are customizable and simplify your most-used tasks to one mouse-click.

screen as they will on paper, and the margins come out exact when printed.

However, the price of this precision is an active and busy screen. While typing, Ami Pro leaves the characters where you type them, but when you move without typing, the program updates the line, precisely repositioning the characters. For touch typists who backspace, type, then backspace again, this constant readjusting of the line may be distracting for a while. Ami Pro offers other editing modes that neither guarantee exact placement on-screen nor correct line breaks on-screen. Within each editing mode, Ami Pro offers a clean-screen option, which lets you turn on or off any screen elements you wish, or you can opt to clear the screen of any extra elements. (Microsoft recently added this capability in its Version 2.0B of Word for Windows.) Of course you can zoom to any percentage view, and you can implement a provided macro to fit the page width to the screen. Ami Pro also supports a sophisticated and flexible equation composer in WYSIWYG mode. We rate layout excellent.

**Mail merge:** Ami Pro's mail merge capabilities include ready-made templates for Avery labels, a simple cardfile database system, selection of records with conditions that you can nest to three levels (but without wild cards), and access to macro features and date and time stamping. Although the mail merge is very strong, you cannot merge an entire file to the screen, but you can merge individual records. You must merge to a file and then call it up on-screen. You can choose whether or not to have the program apply the formatting characteristics of the master document to the data elements or vice versa.

The mail merge supports files from a range of common database programs that produce ASCII files or native dBase, Paradox, Excel, and Lotus files. We rate mail merge excellent.

**Style sheets:** In Ami Pro you control every aspect of layout and formatting

with style sheets, which you can change, save, and manage quite easily. Imported documents that support named styles can have their styles and names imported as well. Style creation by example works well, and styles are a snap to remove and apply. You can preview styles before applying them, and Ami Pro provides strong style-management tools. We rate style sheets excellent.

**Font and printer support:** General font and printer support parallels other Windows programs and uses Windows facilities. Ami Pro will print landscape and portrait pages in the same document on laser printers run from Windows 3.1. Ami Pro includes Adobe Type Manager (ATM), Version 2.02, which also works fine with TrueType fonts included in Windows 3.1. Special font effects such as drop caps take place with frames rather than with an automatic drop cap facility such as the one in WordStar for Windows 1.5. You can kern character pairs where the font supports this. The print options let you include or exclude pictures, notes, summaries, and the like, and the program will print crop marks. Font and printer support earn an excellent rating.

**Reference tools:** Ami Pro supports comprehensive outlining with collapsing levels, promoting and demoting, automatic numbering, and the capability to rearrange categories. The table of contents and indexing work across multiple files through a master document, and the table of contents supports nine levels. The index does not permit a concordance or exclusion file for words to be found or ignored. Numbering uses all the common schemes, and it includes the capability to number lines in the margin, which is a useful feature for legal text. Ami provides a table of authorities function with a preshipped macro. Ami Pro does have a powerful glossary facility for managing boilerplate text of any length. We rate reference tools excellent.

**Import and export:** Ami Pro supports a host of import and export formats for



text, database, spreadsheet, and graphics. For text, the program converts standard ASCII files, IBM DCA/RFT, Microsoft RTF, and graphics in PCX and Lotus PIC formats. Besides these standard formats, you can import documents from products such as WordPerfect (through Version 5.1), WordStar (through Version 6.x for DOS, but not Windows), and Microsoft Word for DOS (through 5.5). You can bring in files from Word for Windows through Version 2.0. Ami Pro also supports DDE and OLE links, Excel transfers, dBase III and IV imports, Lotus spreadsheet import, and a host of other text and graphic formats. Ami Pro does a superior job of importing files from Word for Windows 2.0a, but we found that exporting files produces major font and attribute errors. Because of these exporting errors, we hold import and export support to a very good score.

**Networking:** Ami Pro allows you to access an open file as read-only, and you can edit and save the changes to a different file name. Ami Pro offers integration with cc:Mail and Lotus Notes. If you insert annotations, Ami attaches the date, time, and initials of the author. We rate networking very good.

**Speed:** Version 3.0 is about the same speed as the previous version. The print times are almost identical, and the time differences in tasks are minuscule. Version 3.0 is still quite close to Word for Windows 2.0. We rate its speed very good.

**Macros:** Ami Pro sports a powerful macro language capable of automating almost any task imaginable. Although there is full documentation on-line, most users will probably need to buy the macro manual and developers' kit that is available by mail for \$9.95. The macro facility includes the usual keystroke recorder that is adequate for most simple macros, but full use of the conditions, branching statements, and other programming language constructs requires the developers' kit. This powerful language earns Ami Pro an excellent for macros.

#### DOCUMENTATION:

The well-produced, 651-page users' guide serves as the program's reference manual. It has a solid index, clear explanations, hints, and some examples. A style sheet guide helps new users understand the many preformatted styles as well as the style system, and a quick-reference card completes the paper documentation. On-line documentation includes the macro manual, standard Windows on-line help, and an on-line tutorial. Error messages are generally clear. We rate the documentation very good.

#### EASE OF LEARNING:

With its clear design, on-line tutorial, and fine documentation, Ami Pro is relatively easy to learn when compared to such products as Word for Windows or WordStar for Windows. Ami Pro's extensive customization options, complex organization, and powerful features can overwhelm a novice, but the program's intuitive approach to editing and its well-organized menus and help system make it about as easy to learn as a powerful program of this type can be. Unfortunately, the tutorial has a bug in it that hangs the computer completely if you don't turn on your printer at one point in the tutorial process. We rate ease of learning very good.

#### EASE OF USE:

Experts will find Ami Pro exceedingly easy to use. The strong macro language lets power users customize the program for any working environment. Other tools, such as the glossary, comments, and footnotes, make it possible to construct a near-perfect environment.

Among Ami Pro's numerous user-friendly features, the customizable screen display probably merits the most attention. You can create icon button bars of infinite variety and power using Lotus' SmartIcons. You can group the buttons into sets for specific purposes (mail merge, tables, graphics, charting, editing) and you can have one or more on-screen, placed vertically left or right, horizontally top or bottom, or in a floating window anywhere on the screen.

There are extensive facilities for multi-author text, including redline and strikeout, summaries and histories, comments in different colors, initials for different editors, and document comparison. A sophisticated file manager lets you delete, copy, rename, and move files, as well as change file attributes and directories. You also have great control over default paths for different purposes. Ami allows hidden text and protected items for form-filling purposes. Some users will appreciate the file password protection, which also encrypts.

Users who need to sort text will find the capability to set a custom delimiter and handle a three-level sort by paragraphs and fields a useful tool. You can

set the undo to accommodate up to four levels, including text lost through deletes and backspaces, and you can hold deletes until the next save or timed save, or hold indefinitely. Overall, Ami Pro earns an excellent in ease of use.

#### SUPPORT:

**Support policies:** Lotus offers a 60-day money-back guarantee, in addition to fax and BBS support. There is unlimited support 24 hours a day Monday through Friday. The support runs through 4 p.m. on Saturday and reopens at 8 a.m. on Monday, Eastern time. Lotus also offers corporate-extended support policies. We rate support policies excellent.

**Technical support:** Lotus technical support for Ami Pro continues to be high quality. We spent about 7 minutes on hold, but when we reached support, the staff was knowledgeable and friendly. We rate technical support good.

#### VALUE:

At the standard list price for professional-level word processors, \$495, Ami Pro 3.0 is a fine value. Version 3.0 adds innovative features and brings the product ahead of its main competitor, Word for Windows. Its combination of power, flexibility, and ease of use makes it a fine choice at the high end of the spectrum. Ami Pro is an excellent value.

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

#### BENCHMARKS

#### INFO WORLD

#### Windows professional word processors

	Ami Pro Version 3.0	Ami Pro Version 2.0	Microsoft Word for Windows Version 2.0
<b>File operations/simple file</b>			
Open	0:05	0:04	0:03
Save	0:02	0:02	0:02
Print to HP LaserJet	1:19	1:20	1:33
Import WordPerfect 5.1 DOS	0:16	0:09	0:14
<b>File operations/complex file</b>			
Open	0:12	0:07	0:03
Save	0:05	0:02	0:04
Print preview	0:07	0:12	0:17
Print to QMS-PS 810	5:36	5:16	5:23
<b>Search tools/simple file</b>			
Reorder chapters	0:05	0:08	0:49
Global search and replace	0:02	0:02	0:02
<b>Search tools/complex file</b>			
Search for last word	0:04	0:03	<1
Global search and replace	0:03	0:03	0:02
<b>Editing tasks/simple file</b>			
Alter margin and repaginate	0:02	0:02	0:02
Change base font and repaginate	0:03	0:03	0:02
Jump to bottom	0:01	0:01	<1
Generate table of contents	2:16	1:53	1:14
<b>Editing tasks/complex file</b>			
Reformat and repaginate (font)	0:04	0:04	0:02
Jump to bottom	0:03	0:04	<1
Cut and paste	0:08	0:12	0:09
<b>Layout tasks/complex file</b>			
Place PCX file	0:07	0:09	0:07
Place EPS file	0:08	0:07	0:05

#### REPORT CARD INFO WORLD

WINDOWS PROFESSIONAL WORD PROCESSOR

#### Ami Pro

VERSION 3.0



Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
<b>Performance</b>		
Basic editing	(80)	Excellent
Proofing tools	(80)	Very Good
Layout	(80)	Excellent
Mail merge	(50)	Excellent
Style sheets	(50)	Excellent
Font and printer support	(50)	Excellent
Reference tools	(50)	Excellent
Import and export	(50)	Very Good
Networking	(50)	Very Good
Speed	(50)	Very Good
Macros	(30)	Excellent
<b>Documentation</b>		
Ease of learning	(75)	Very Good
Ease of use	(130)	Excellent
<b>Support</b>		
Support policies	(25)	Excellent
Technical support	(25)	Good
<b>Value</b>		
	(50)	Excellent
<b>Final score</b>		<b>8.9</b>

#### PRODUCT SUMMARY

**Company:** Lotus Development Corp.'s word processing division, based in Atlanta, can be reached at (800) 831-9679.

**Price:** \$495; \$79 upgrade from previous versions; \$129 upgrade from any competitive word processor.

**Requirements:** Windows 3.x-capable computer with a minimum of 2 megabytes of RAM; 5 megabytes of disk space (15 megabytes required for full installation); Windows-compatible graphics display; Windows 3.x or HP New Wave.

**Pros:** Outstanding user customization; superior display accuracy; powerful mail merge; strong tables and graphics; superior layout capabilities; handles multiple documents well; supports a full macro language; wide range of import and export capabilities.

**Cons:** Extra-cost macro developers' kit required for full use of macro language; does not support story lines through frames; will not calculate numbers in the text — only in tables; minor bug in tutorial; bug in export of Word for Windows.

**Summary:** Ami Pro clearly helps set the standard for professional word processing under Windows. This program has a few more features than Word for Windows and considerably more flexibility in configuring the word processing environment to an individual user's needs. Its frames prove easier to use, and the capability to manage multiple icons and icon sets may well be a major competitive advantage.