RESEARCH IN
WORD PROCESSING
NEWSLETTER
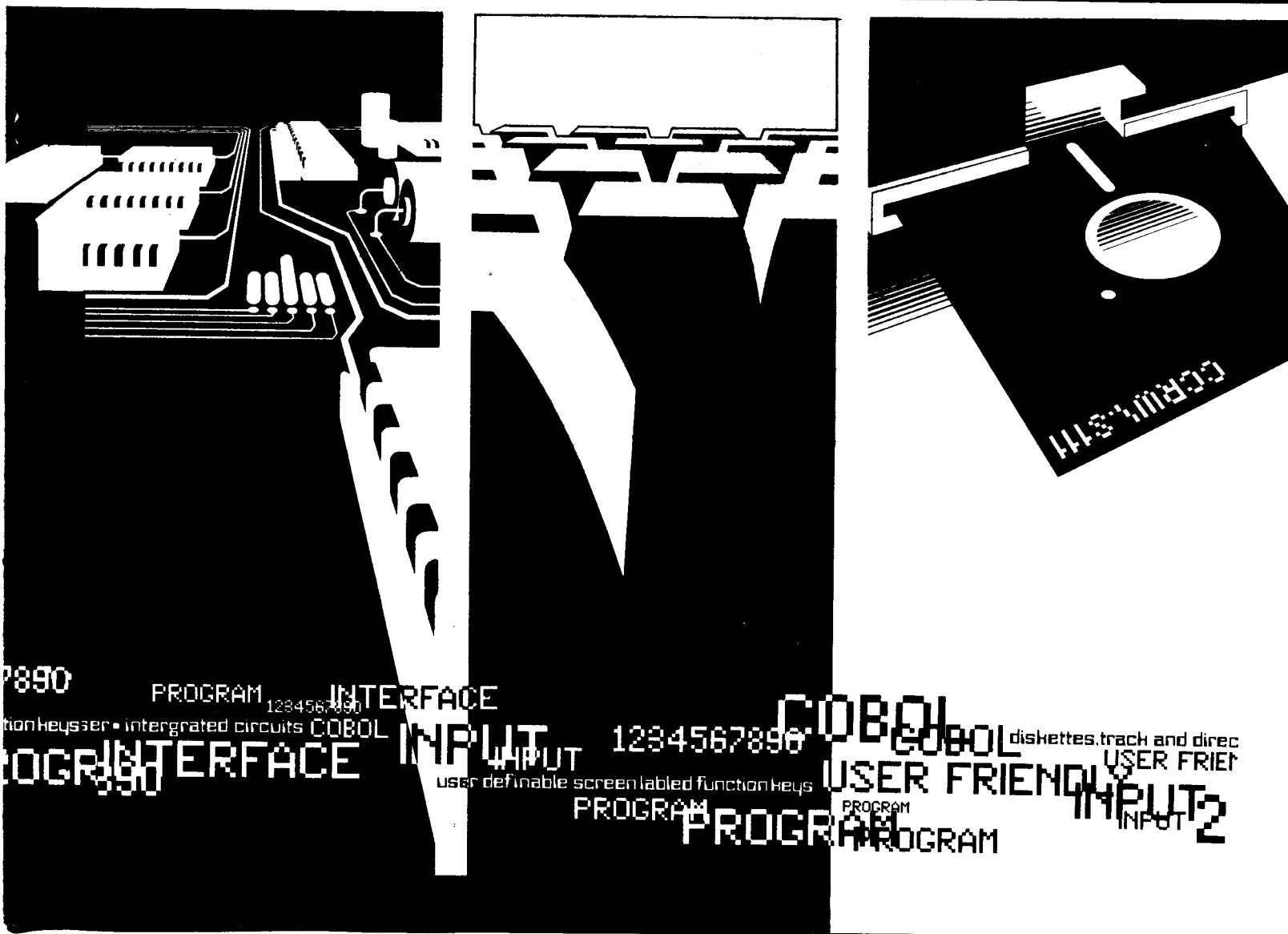
Writing
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for
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Microsoft Word 4.0
Battling *WordPerfect* for #1

Mauro G. Di Pasquale, M.D.

Microsoft Word is different from all the other contenders for the word pro-
cessing heavyweight title, and, since release 4.0, has an edge on all the rest
— but perhaps only until the next version of one of the other major con-
tenders.

WordPerfect 4.2 (WordPerfect Corp.), *XyWrite III+* (XyQuest), *WordStar
2000* version 3 (MicroPro International), and *Nota Bene* 2.1 (Dragonfly Soft-
ware) are all world class word processors, and none would disappoint you
with its features and power.

Yet other programs such as *MultiMate Advantage II* (Ashton Tate), *Word-
Star Professional* 4.0 (MicroPro), *Manuscript* (Lotus), *DisplayWrite4* (IBM),
PFS Professional Write (Software Publishing), *Samna Word IV* (Samna), and
Q&A Write (Symantec), are not far behind.

The latest releases of *Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, WordStar 2000,
XyWrite III+,* and *Nota Bene* are powerful, full featured, well documented,
word processors—each with its own special features.

Nota Bene 2.1 is the best word processor for scholars because it has so
many academic writing features. It is the only word processing program en-
dorsed by the MLA (Modern Language Association). *Nota Bene* is a reworking
of two other program, *XyWrite III+* and *FY! 3000 Plus.* Both programs have
been substantially modified, and integrated into *Nota Bene,* making it the
best information processor on the market.

For non-scholarly writing, *Microsoft Word, Word Perfect,* and *WordStar
2000*—since they are easier to learn and have many useful features not
found in *Nota Bene*—may be better choices. The competition among word
processing programs is fierce and unrelenting. Thus, all the major word pro-
cessors play a constant game of catchup. Each word processor tries to incor-
porate as many of the competitors' successful features as possible, while
keeping those features that make their program unique and attractive to its
present users. However, with the frantic rate of improvements being incor-
porated into the top word processors, it may soon be difficult to find
distinguishing features among them as they reach similar end points from
different directions.

It is beyond the scope of this article to compare the features of all the major
word processors. I'll concentrate, therefore, on the obvious rivalry between
two of the best word processors, *Microsoft Word* and *WordPerfect.*

This rivalry has been going on for a number of years, with each revision of
one followed by a revision of the other. For now *Word* 4.0 has the advantage
of having the latest update. *WordPerfect* 5.0, which is to be released this
March, will have several new enhancements such as on-screen mixed text
and graphics, with the ability to crop size, and rotate imported graphics and
place them anywhere on a page. A preview mode will allow you to show facing
pages and preview text and graphics in context. However, there seems to be
little improvement in the outlining function, and it still won't let us talk to it
with a mouse.

Microsoft Word is not perfect; it has many deficiencies. For me, however, its features overshadow these deficiencies and make it my word processor of choice. These features include:

■ **its outlining capabilites**—better than those of any other word processor and rivaling the best stand alone program (*Nota Bene, WordPerfect,* and *XyWrite III +* all have some outlining capabilities but none have fully integrated outline processors—although *Nota Bene* comes closest).

■ **its multiple document window** (*WordPerfect* has only two. *Nota Bene* and *XyWrite III +* both allow up to nine).

■ **its WYSIWYG** (what you see is what you get) display. *WordPerfect* lacks true WYSIWYG (as does *Nota Bene* and *XyWrite*) although it can show bold, underlining and italics, and has a preview mode (see below). *WordPerfect* 5.0 will allow true WYSIWYG (superior to *Word's*) when used with the Hercules Graphics Card Plus with RamFont.

■ **its style sheets** (allows changing the format of entire documents with just a few keystrokes—some desktop publishing programs, such as *Ventura Publisher*, have adopted this feature as a way of standardizing document pages).

■ **its glossary** (containing stored passages of text that can be inserted by typing a few characters).

■ **and its resident rodent,** which I find faster and more versatile than the keyboard, especially when revising documents (*WordPerfect* does not have, nor is it likely to have, internal support for these critters).

On the other hand, *WordPerfect* has several features which are missing from *Word* or which are superior to those found in *Word*, such as:

■ **better printing features.** The print queue is automatic and you can print from the screen, or from the file directory. *Word* allows printing from the screen and limited printing from the document retrieval window — if you choose your file names carefully you can manipulate this window to hold all the files you want to print, and batch print them instead of loading and printing each one separately. In *Word* the print queue must be toggled on unless you're printing in batch mode.

■ **a superior spelling checker.** *Word's* spelling checker still lacks the sophistication and integration seen in *WordPerfect* and *XyWrite III +*. *XyWrite's* autospell, and spelling substitution feature makes its spelling checker one of the best around.

■ **a document preview mode** (which allows you to view the file as it will be printed, with headers, footers, page numbers, and document and paragraph formats). Although *PageView*, an add-on program recently introduced by Microsoft, now allows you to preview *Word* documents as they will appear when printed.

■ **superior indexing abilities** (Both *Word* and *WordPerfect* have an autoindexing feature. However, *WordPerfect's* use of concordance files streamlines indexing by removing some of the tedium involved in marking every word to be indexed).

■ **a timed backup feature** which automatically backs up your file to disk at specified intervals.

■ **multiple undo function** which can recall several previous deletions—*Word* only allows one undo (or in special circumstances, two).

Then, too, *WordPerfect* is not burdened by *Word's* scratch buffer—an annoying feature which limits the size of file you can effectively work with. Before *Word* 4.0, it was not even possible to spellcheck documents over 50 pages long, but because of enhancements in the spelling program, this is no longer a limitation. However, there are limitations on indexing large documents (they must be broken up into smaller segments) and in search-and-replace operations (for extensive changes the command must be entered several times since *Word* stops searching once the scratch buffer is full, requiring you to save the document before you can continue with the search and replace). I ran into this same memory problem with the CP/M program *Final Word*, and it was just as frustrating then.

However, because of *Word's* many desirable features, I have learned to live with the memory limitations, the lack of document preview, and the printer limitations.

The new features and improvements present in *Word* 4.0 (which make using *Word* even more worthwhile) include:

Extensive macro-processing capabilities (superior to *WordPerfect's*). Macros are similar to glossaries except that macros store a series of commands that can be executed by just one command. The use of macros automates complex and repetitive tasks, which would ordinarily require several keystrokes, and reduces operator error. You can create macros on the fly or by typing them out separately. Before *Word* 4.0 a macro program such as *ProKey* had to be used if you wanted macro shortcuts. Not having to use a separate program frees up some some RAM that can be more constructively used for document processing (and other terminate and stay resident programs).

A new revision mark feature (redlining), which allows you to track changes made to a document from one version to the next.

Spreadsheet linking. You can now move and update information from spreadsheets such as *Microsoft Excel* and *Lotus 1-2-3*.

The ability to display line, column, and page numbers (as in *WordPerfect*), although the page display function could be further improved — when you add or delete text, *Word* does not automatically repaginate the document; instead, it stays by its old page numbers until you manually repaginate.

Significant speed enhancements in many of its features (especially in character mode), including scrolling, cursor movement (cursor speed can also be varied through the Options command), searching and replacing, repaginating, loading and saving. And *Word* now allows you to toggle between graphics and character mode. Thus you can do most of your initial writing while in character mode (which, although much faster, does not give you WYSIWYG display capabilities) and then switch to graphics mode to implement and see special formatting features.

The ability to search and replace formats and styles—you can, for example, replace all bold text with italics or change paragraph formatting from, say, ragged right to justified.

Multiple uses of function keys. *Word* can now be both command driven (using a combination of function keys as in *WordPerfect*) and menu driven. Because of the menus, *Word* is easier to learn. Because of the direct commands both *Word* and *WordPerfect* are easier to use (once you've become familiar with the program) than *Word* 3.1 (which was mostly menu driven except for certain commands, such as formatting text).

Style by example. This feature makes it easier to make up style sheets since you can use any document (which has the formatting you want) to create a style sheet containing that document's formatting features.

An improved spelling checker (although not improved enough). You can now spell check a single word, a paragraph, a page, a section or the whole document. The spelling checker has been expanded to include 130,000 words.

An improved thesaurus. You can now use the mouse in the thesaurus window to select words, replace words, or scroll through the synonym list.

Table of contents generation from an outline (with as many levels as you wish—similar to the function seen in dedicated outline programs.

The ability to use lines, borders and boxes within documents to separate and enhance parts of the document. This is a useful feature if your printer supports the IBM extended graphics. If your printer doesn't support the extended character set, hyphens usually replace the boxes and lines — although the results are unpredictable and depend on the individual printer.

Lotus-like command explanations using the 1-2-3-style moving bar menu (better than the pull down menus which are becoming so popular). Highlighting a command displays an explanatory message below the menu. As you move the highlight, the message changes to describe the function of the current command.

The ability to zoom the active window so it fills the screen, and to alternate zoomed windows (giving you the best of multiple windows and multiple documents).

New printer support. *Word* 4.0 supports several new printers and has some enhanced drivers for some others.

Customizable display. The screen in *Word* can now be customized in several ways — you can even remove all screen borders so that the screen looks as bare as in *WordPerfect*.

There have also been improvements made to the outlining, table of contents, math, windowing, printing, and mouse functions — and many other minor improvements.

Of all *Word*'s additions and enhancements, however, the most important is the new document management and retrieval system. Microsoft has introduced some of the capabilities of Microsoft *File* (a forms-based data-management system which interfaces with the Apple Macintosh version of Microsoft *Word*) into *Word* 4.0. The result is a new type of word processor which has greater power and flexibility than conventional word-processing programs. In fact, it adds another dimension to word processing. *Word*'s document-retrieval feature is a sophisticated file management program (FMP) that's specifically designed for the storage and retrieval of files using both specific fields and full text searching.

In order to use the specific fields to search for a file, you must first fill out a summary sheet for each document (it pops up automatically when saving the docu-

ment for the first time, and you can fill it out or ignore it. If you ignore it, *Word* fills out sections of it automatically).

The document summaries (which store identifying information about each formatted document you create) are the nucleus of the file cataloguing and finding facility and are also useful for keeping track of document revisions (*WordPerfect*'s document summary will also keep track of document revisions but does not have the power of *Word*'s file-management system).

Although it's true that this new feature can help you find that file about Uncle Sam's Widgets (you know that letter exists but you can't remember if you filed it under widjsam.doc or unclewid.doc or whocares.doc — and you can't remember in what subdirectory it's in anyway), it can also do much more. The document summary and retrieval features can be used to organize the information in your files into a text-oriented data base—and thus make it easier to analyze and use that repository of written information that all writers eventually accumulate.

With this new feature, *Word* now has the ability to retrieve virtually any item stored in any directory by using either the keywords in the fields of the document summary (linked by AND, OR, and NOT) or by doing a full-text search of your documents for a specific string of text.

There is, however, a flaw in the system; Microsoft has not taken its new document-management-and-retrieval system to its logical conclusion (although I'm sure it will in future revisions). Finding a file or list of files which conform with the search pattern (and hopefully containing the information we are looking for) is only half the battle. You must also be able to manipulate and massage this information into something useful. Almost all stand-alone text-management systems (including the free-form indexing-and-retrieval system used in *Nota Bene*) have the ability to cut and paste information from one or more files to another specified file (forming the base for a new letter, article or even book). The lack of this cut-and-paste feature limits the usefulness of *Word*'s text-management system.

A full text management system (like some of the dedicated programs now available and which I'll cover in my next article) can ease the time-consuming tasks of researching, analyzing and organizing the electronic information that you have in your document files. A good text-management system is really a knowledge processor, allowing you to easily and quickly search, retrieve, and analyze information from an almost unlimited number of text files.

Word now allows only the retrieval of files using keywords, or strings of text, linked by Boolean logic commands. While this is an effective means of organizing all your files for instant access, it does not readily allow the retrieval of specific bits of information from the various files listed in the document-retrieval window. Of course, one could do a printout of the files in the document retrieval window and then do a search on each file for the information needed. This might do if only a few files had to be searched, but for any number of files, the whole process would be too time consuming and tedious.

The next version of *Word* could well have everything in place. With a bit more development, *Word* could be a better knowledge processor than *Nota Bene* (which has an excellent text-indexing-and-retrieval system); especially since *Nota Bene* lacks many of *Word*'s features.

Besides adding a cut-and-paste feature, there are a few other features that could be added, including the ability to make tabular or spreadsheet-like reports of the fields within the document summary as well as the document summaries themselves. The search path criteria could be simplified by allowing all subdirectories of a directory to be searched without typing out the full pathname (for example /word/letters/*.* + could mean search all files in the word directory and all subordinate subdirectories. It is tedious to type /word/letters/*.*, word/articles/*.*, /word/notes/*.*, word/letters/computer/*.* etc. in order to tell *Word* that you want the *Word* subdirectory and all its subordinate subdirectories searched).

Microsoft could improve *Word* in other ways, too. An integrated style-and-grammar checker would be a nice touch. The ability to merge text and graphics would, along with *Word*'s other features (such as multiple columns), make it a reasonable desktop publishing program (although *WordStar 2000* Release 3 with *Inset* now built in, and the upcoming *WordPerfect* 5.0 have superior graphics capabilities). I'd also like to see more compatibility between *Word*'s files and the files of other word processors. A companion product, however, nicely fills this gap. *Word Exchange*, a customized version of *Software Bridge*, will translate *Word* documents into those of other word processors and vice versa.

Taking everything into consideration, the reason I use *Word* is because it has more of the features which I consider essential to my writing. However, because my needs may be different from yours, *Word* might not be the best word processor for you. Your decision should be based on your own needs, not mine or anyone else's.

Software Index

Microsoft Word (Microsoft Corporation, 16011 NE 36th Way, Box 97017, Redmond, WA, USA, 98073 — in Canada contact Microsoft Canada Inc., 6300 Northwest Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, L4V 1J7)

Nota Bene (Dragonfly Software, 285 W. Broadway, Suite 500, New York, NY, USA, 10013)

WordPerfect (WordPerfect Corporation, 288 West Centre Street, Orem, UT, USA, 84057 — in Canada contact J.B.Marketing 120 Ninth St. E. Box 422, Cornwall, Ontario, K6H 5T2)

MicroPro International Corp., 33 San Pablo Ave., San Rafael, CA, USA, 94903

Word Exchange (Systems Compatibility Corp., 401 North Wabash, Suite 600, Chicago, Illinois, USA, 60611)

XyWrite III + (XyQuest Inc., Post Office Box 372, Bedford, MA, USA, 01730)

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MLA Educational Software Evaluation Project

IBM has provided funding to the Modern Language Association and the Center for Applied Linguistics for evaluating instructional and research programs written by faculty for IBM and compatible micros. The peer-review committee is interested in various types of submissions: ■ foreign language instructional software of various types—drill and practice, tutorials, simulations— dealing with grammar, reading comprehension, writing practice, or culture and civilization ■ software for instruction in English composition, writing, and rhetoric ■ tutorials for literary analysis in English or foreign languages ■ authoring software ■ research-oriented software, such as text-retrieval and analysis programs, concordance and index generators, specialized spelling checkers and thesauri, programs useful in second-language-acquisition research, machine-readable texts, and so on. Authors who submit software for evaluation before May 1, 1988, will receive royalties from future sales. Contact the Software Evaluation Project, Modern Language Association, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003-6981.

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> *Xywrite still has all the powerful capabilities of earlier versions, including file compare, side-by-side and serpentine columns, mail merge, and in-document math. You can remap the keyboard, insert foreign accents, and do small but helpful things like print the final number of a page anywhere in the document (for example, 'page a of b,' which turns into 'page 4 of 10' of the printout). A new file-locking adaptation lets you run Xywrite on a network, while a Form command helps you to fill in preprinted forms." (pp. 64-65)*

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> *"The structured orientation of **The Publisher** marks a radical philosophical departure from the recent trends in workstation-based 'desktop publishing' packages. It views a document as consisting of a collection of named structures—such as paragraphs, headings, footnotes, etc. Layout and typographic attributes are associated with each structure through document templates, which can be used over and over again, or designed only for a specific document. An authoritative, structurally tagged file is always preserved for exchange or editing on nongraphics terminals or microcomputers.*
>
> *Users can choose four different display styles for documents in **The Publisher**: a complete WYSIWYG display, an interpreted display with embedded structural tags, an interpreted display with tags shown as icons, or an interpreted display with no visible tags."* (p. 7)

Rosenbaum, Daniel J. *Using WordPerfect for the Macintosh.* Berkeley, CA: Osborne/McGraw-Hill, 1988.

Ross, David Justin. "Omnifont Character Recognition Provides Flexible Data Handling: Techniques of Pattern Recognition Allow Machines to Accept Data Printed in a Wide Array of Fonts with Minimal Human Intervention." *Computer Technology Review.* 7:16 (Winter 1987), pp. 91-93.

> *"Satisfactory text recognition goes far beyond the identification of individual characters. Other problems involve distinguishing between characters with identical or near-identical features, broken characters, characters touching one another, text embedded in an image, and a host of other typographical complications. Palantir's solution is, therefore, based on a pipelined architecture that applies a series of identification tests to each character. Each test's output serves as input for the next text in line. In this way, possible candidates are gradually winnowed down until a single choice remains. When uncertainty remains even after the recognition process is concluded, the questionable item is flagged as uncertain.*
>
> *Part of the testing regime is semantic. The system understands rules about English based on a million-word sample of the language. These rules are sufficiently sophisticated to be applied to the testing of names and other words, even if never encountered before."* (p. 92)

Schcolnik, Miriam. "RE-WORD CALI: A Method for Practicing Reading Skills with the Aid of a Word Processor." *CALICO JOURNAL.* 5:1 (September 1987), pp. 65-72.

Seymour, Jim et al. "Fast, Flexible, & Forward-Looking: As the Quality of Word Processors Improves, Distinctions between Professional, Corporate, and Personal Programs Have Blurred. Some of the Best Programs Seamlessly Integrate Text, Graphics, and 1-2-3 Worksheets in a Merger of Word Processing and Desktop Publishing. Other Offer Robust Features Geared to Professionals—Lawyers, Scientists, Academics." *PC Magazine.* 7:4 (February 29, 1988), pp. 92-165, 208-230, 255-279, 292-345. (55 programs are reviewed by 48 reviewers)

—————. "Word Processors: Summary of Features." *PC Magazine*. 7:4 (February 29, 1988), pp. 166-205.

—————. "But Is It Desktop Publishing? Word Processing Programs Are Encroaching on the Low End of the Desktop Publishing Market with Features like Graphics in Text and Snaking and Side-by-Side Columns." *PC Magazine*. 7:4 (February 29, 1988), pp. 254-255.

—————. "Performance Tests: Word Processors." *PC Magazine*. 7:4 (February 29, 1988), pp. 280-290.

Sheldon, Tom. *Microsoft Word: Secrets, Solutions, Shortcuts*. Berkeley, CA: Osborne/McGraw-Hill, 1988.

Simpson, David. "Color Brightens Desktop Publishing: What's Expensive and Slow, but Saves Money and Time? For Some Applications, the Answer Might Be PostScript-based Color Desktop Publishing." *Mini-MicroSystems*. 21:2 (February 1988), pp. 43-48.

"Software Elevates the Reading/Writing Skills of Inner-City students." *T.H.E. Journal*. 15:6 (February 1988), pp. 61-62.

Stang, David. "*First Publisher*: This Inexpensive Package Offers Surprising Power for Its Price, and Is a Good Introduction to Page Makeup Programs." *Personal Publishing*. 4:1 (January 1988), pp. 50-56.

Stone, Paula S. "Waiting for the Word: Choices Are Few, but Promises Great, in Mac Word Processing." *InfoWorld Macintosh Target Edition No. 2*. 10:5 (February 1, 1988), p. 53.

Tatro, Donna E. "Using Microcomputers to Format Large and Complex Manuscripts: Myth or Reality?" *Scope*. 5:4 (November-December 1987), pp. 67-68. (Reprint of *SIGUCCS Newsletter*, Summer 1987)

Todd, Gail. *DisplayWrite 4: The Complete Reference*. Berkeley, CA: Osborne/McGraw-Hill, 1988.

Weigand, C. J. "Roll Type Up in a Ball, Curve It into an Arch, or Twist It into a Pretzel. *PosterMaKer Plus* Is Much More Than a Poster Maker." *Personal Publishing*. 4:1 (January 1988), pp. 58-64.

Weinberg, Bella Hass. "Observations on the Field of Computational Linguistics . . . by an Information Scientist." *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science*. 14:2 (December/January 1988), p. 33.

Wesley, Michael D. "A Guide to *Guide*: Hypertext Is a Great Idea. And *Guide* Is a Great Hypertext Program for the Mac." *MacUser*. 4:1 (January 1988), pp. 126-132.

"The professor was reading a paper on psychophysiology that had been turned in that morning. She had already been impressed by several of the students in her freshman class, but she could hardly believe the quality of the work in front of her.

*It had taken her a long time to recognize the potential of a personal computer in the hands of a bright student. But since the school had standardized on the Macintosh a few years before, there had been a noticeable rise in the quality of thinking and the level of understanding displayed by her students. And once she'd decided to allow her students to use **Guide** to write and turn in their papers electronically, instead of in printed form, the quality of their finished work had improved as well.*

She paused a moment to reflect on the irony of a 'paper' that would never reach printed form. Perhaps they would have to coin a new term for the electronic documents that were now taking the place of typewritten or even word-processed reports. Or perhaps not. The irony was rather amusing, she thought, as she moused on the next section of the paper, a discussion of endorphin production.

The student had made excellent use of the abilities of hypertext. Where words were used that required a definition, the student had created a note. The professor, or any reader for that matter, could click

on the uncertain word and the definition appeared briefly in a small window on top of the text. The professor quickly checked the definition of 'endorphin,' then continued.

In the next paragraph the student quoted a study done at the University of Denver and footnoted it. Instead of having to scan the footnotes section for the correct citation, the professor clicked on the reference in the text. Instantly, the citation appeared in place of the quotation, and as quickly went away when the professor clicked on the 'footnote.' Again, the professor chuckled at the anachronistic terminology.

A bit further on, the student referred back to a diagram that had been used to clarify a point in an earlier section of the paper. Instead of having to search for the diagram, the professor clicked on the reference. **Guide** *located the chart and moved the display to the appropriate page. When the professor was ready to go on with the text, she clicked on the chevron in the scroll bar and returned to the precise location of the reference. This was so much easier than flipping through page after page, she thought.*

When she finished the paper, the professor made a few short notes at the end, then sent it back to the student via electronic mail. Along with her comments, and a grade of A, the professor sent along a suggestion that the student submit the paper to **Psychophysiology Now***, the first and most respected of the electronic journals that had appeared in recent years. The professor sighed with satisfaction and called it an evening." (pp. 127-128)*

Widman, Jake. "How Good Can Your Spelling Bee? *Thunder, Spellswell, Spelling Champion* Spelling Checkers." *Publish!* 3:2 (February 1988), pp. 72, 74.

Young, Charles N. "Software Packages that Support Greek." *CALICO JOURNAL.* 5:2 (December, 1987), pp. 92-95.

Zeitz, Leigh. "Making Labels Using a Word Processor." *CUE Newsletter.* 10:4 (February/March 1988), p. 18. (written with *AppleWorks* in mind)

Free Hypertext Document Available for Macintosh

The December 1987 issue of *Wheels Europe*, an Apple University Consortium publication prepared at Lund University, calls attention to emerging recognition of hypertext in European universities. One hypertext document that can actually be experimented with comes from the recent NordDATA Joint Scandanavian Computer Conference and is available at no charge, including the software needed to read it. Send an initialized 400 or 800K Macintosh diskette (for copying the document onto), including necessary postage, to Jakob Nielsen, Department of Computer Science, Technical University of Denmark, DK-2800 Lyngby Copenhagen, Denmark.

Computer and the Humanities: Summer Courses in Belgium

The University of Leuven in Belgium will be the site of a "Summer Institute on Computer Applications in the Humanities" on July 18-August 26, 1988. Sponsored by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and the University of Pennsylvania, the program will offer both graduate and undergraduate credit for the following courses: ■ A Practical Introduction to Computing in the Humanities (John J. Hughes) ■ Computer Applications in the Humanities (John R. Abercrombie) ■ Textual Analysis (John Frought) ■ Introduction to the Oxford Concordance Program for Research (Susan M. Hockey) ■ Stylistic Analysis (Nicole Delbecque) and ■ Computers and Translation (Frank Van Enyde). Contact Peter Steiner, Chairman, Comparative Literature Department, 420 Williams Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6305.

Prewriting and Revising with *Writer's Helper*

Sheila Honig

Thirteen computer sections of freshman English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City are currently using *Writer's Helper*, a prewriting tool and text editor. Each class is using this software in conjunction with *Appleworks* on a 45-megabyte Corvus hard disk network. Perhaps the chief strength of *Writer's Helper* is the fact that it addresses so many problems the beginning writer faces during his discovery of a topic and his evaluation of his drafts. Half of the 22 programs on the current version of *Writer's Helper* are prewriting activities; the other eleven programs aid the writer in revision.

Of the eleven prewriting activities, four have proven most useful in helping my students find and organize subjects for the essays. "Brainstorms," asks the writer to freewrite for 3-10 lines to discover a topic. The point of freewriting is that if the student writes quickly and continually he is more likely to discover ideas since he is not losing his train of thought by stopping to reread and edit. In non-computer classes, students are often tempted to stop freewriting and start evaluating what they have just written. However, this program prompts the student with a series of periods if he stops longer than normal between letters.

Another popular prewriting program is "Lists" which asks the student to list 10 possible topics. The student can also generate a list of details about the subject once he decides he wants to explore it. The "Three Ways of Seeing" program is based on the particle-wave-field theory developed by Young, Becker, and Pike. In this program, the writer states his topic. Next, he indicates into which of the following categories his subject fits: person, place, thing, event, idea, or activity. Finally, the program prompts the writer with a list of 12-15 questions such as,

What would be a good description of _____?

What has changed about the appearance of _____?

How could you compare your subject's appearance to similar _____?

A helpful prewriting program for the student composing a persuasive paper is "Debating an Issue." Last semester my students collaborated in groups of four on the prewriting for their persuasive essays. Using this program, the groups first stated their opinion on an issue. Next, they listed their supporting points for both sides of the argument. If they listed too many counter arguments, the program asked if they wanted to change their opinion on the issue. If they listed only a few counter arguments, the program suggested that they might be rather one-sided in their outlook on the topic.

Other prewriting programs on *Writer's Helper* include: "The Questioner," which poses questions that might lead the writer to a topic; "Teacher's Questioner," a program which allows the instructor to enter his own heuristics; and "Crazy Contrasts," a program which spurs creativity by asking the student to compare/contrast his subject with an unrelated subject. "Develop a Single Paragraph" seems especially useful for the remedial college writer. The only objectionable prewriting activity in *Writer's Helper* is "Five-Paragraph Theme" since that approach is very restrictive and, unlike the other prewriting activities, does not reflect modern rhetorical theory. After completing each prewriting program, the student is asked whether he wants to save and print his material.

Once the writer finishes a draft, the other eleven programs on *Writer's Helper* aid him in revision. One of the most popular is "Count of Words in Sentences." This program counts the words in each sentence and then displays that count in bar graph form. The student can quickly determine if he has written several short, choppy sentences in a row or a string of long, unwieldy ones. (The editing programs in *Writer's Helper*, for the most part, are non-judgmental, letting the writer decide whether the document should be changed.) Also included is a readability index. Although recent research calls into question the reliability of these indexes, students are most intrigued by determining at what grade level their writing tests out.

The "List Document by Sentences" feature allows writers to see each of their sentences in isolation. My classes use this part of *Writer's Helper* to proofread because they are not distracted by all the other information around each sentence as they are when they are looking at the entire draft. Another program, "Check for To Be Verbs," helps writers determine if they are using passive voice constructions in their sentences.

Other features, which my students use less frequently, include: "Outline," which lists the first sentence of each paragraph so that the writer can

check for paragraph continuity and coherence; "Word Frequency Count," which tells the writer the number of times he is using a word (up to 20 words such as "a," "an," and "the" can be excluded); and "Count of Words in Paragraph," which indicates the number of words in each paragraph (this feature might help the writer determine if he is adequately developing his ideas). *Writer's Helper* even contains programs which check for gender-related language, usage errors, and commonly confused homonyms (the current version of *Writer's Helper* does not contain a spelling program). After the writer completes the revision activity, some of the evaluative programs ask the writer whether he wants the computer to mark these problems on his document.

I have detected only one bug in this software. If you are using an Apple IIE, once you choose an activity you cannot escape from it although each program says you can. This flaw has been corrected on the new version of *Writer's Helper* which will be available in April 1988. In addition, the new version, compatible with numerous word processing programs, will support both Apple and IBM networks. It will contain a small word processor with line-editing features and approximately twice the number of activities.

Of course, even with the current version containing 22 activities, the instructor usually must give some direction regarding what program(s) students may want to use. I often suggest a couple prewriting and revision programs for each project.

Despite the large size of the editing portion of *Writer's Helper*, it is not without limitations. Much to the dismay of my students, *Writer's Helper*, like other text editors, merely flags possible problems. The writer must decide whether to make changes and how to make them. However, from a teacher's viewpoint that is actually one of the strengths of the program. The information offered by *Writer's Helper* is much like the advice given during peer evaluations of writing in that ultimately the writer is responsible for his work. Terry Winograd, a computer science and linguistics professor at Stanford University was asked how long he thought it would be before computers could really edit writing as well as a professional editor can. He replied, "It's not even in sight" since computers are not good at interpretation and decision making (Wallraff, *The Atlantic*, Jan. 1988).

However, a program such as *Writer's Helper* can help students evaluate their papers in an organized fashion. Often in critiquing their own essays, freshman writers do not know what to look for or try to look for everything at once. William Wresch, the writer of this software, is an English instructor, and his understanding of the beginning writer's problems has helped produce a useful prewriting and editing tool.

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*   *   *

Writer's Helper is available for $120 from CONDUIT, The University of Iowa-Oakdale Campus, Iowa City, IA 52242.

Manuscript Submissions Welcome

The *Newsletter* welcomes article submissions that pertain to word-processing, text-analysis, and research applications in professional writing situations. Also, hardware and software reviews are encouraged, but please contact Dr. Jim Schwartz, Hardware/Software Review Editor, **before** submitting them (call Jim at 605-394-1246). Manuscripts may be submitted either as hard copy or on 5¼" diskettes using *XEROX Ventura Publisher, MicroSoft Word, WordPerfect,* DCA, or standard ASCII code. If submitting disks, please make sure they are formatted either in MS-DOS, PC-DOS, or a popular CP/M format (Kaypro, Zenith, etc.) The Editors reserve the right to edit manuscripts, if necessary. If you want your manuscript or diskette returned, please send enough postage to cover the return along with a self-addressed envelope. Address all correspondence to the Editors, *Research in Word Processing Newsletter,* South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, 501 E. St. Joseph, Rapid City, SD 57701-3995. Jim Schwartz may also be reached on *CompuServe* (70177,1154).

NOTES

Back issues are available from April 1984 (Vol.2 No.4). Contact the editors for a descriptive listing and price.

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