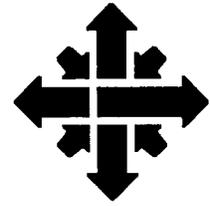


Microcomputer Newsletter

University
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Announcement:

Macintosh Applications Seminar

The UCC Microcomputer Systems Group is sponsoring a Macintosh Applications Seminar on the afternoon of May 16 (12:00 - 5:00) and all day May 17 (9:00 - 5:00) at the Coffman Union Great Hall. We have invited major Macintosh software and hardware vendors to discuss their products (including Lotus Development {Jazz}, Microsoft {Chart, File, and Word}, Aldus {PageMaker} and Apple Computer). The Mac Applications Seminar will provide you with an excellent opportunity to talk with vendors as well as see and try new Macintosh products.

News:

Discount Program Price Changes

Will the price for this computer (printer, memory upgrade, serial interface...) go down? That question is a very popular topic of discussion among microcomputer buyers. The answer usually boils down to something along the lines of "Probably. But the really interesting question is not if but *when* the price will go down, and nobody knows the answer to that question until *after* the fact". Now that you know the ground rules (the prices go down eventually, but you don't know when until after it happens), here is the latest round of price changes:

IBM

IBM lowered the prices for the PC and XT configurations available through the discount program. Note that the IBM AT price remains unchanged (\$ 4100). The new prices are:

config. 1: IBM PC, 256K memory, two 5.25" double sided disk drives, keyboard, asynchronous communications adapter, PC-DOS 2.1. (Please note: *this configuration does not include a monitor.*) \$ 1562

config. 2: IBM PC, 256K memory, two 5.25" double sided disk drives, monochrome display, monochrome display adapter (includes parallel printer port), keyboard, asynchronous communications adapter, PC-DOS 2.1. \$ 1910

config. 3: IBM XT, 256K memory, one 5.25" double sided disk drive, one 10 Mbyte fixed disk, keyboard, monochrome display, monochrome display adapter (includes parallel printer port), keyboard, asynchronous communications adapter, PC-DOS 2.1. \$ 2862

Apple

The special Apple Macintosh bundle prices (Macintosh, external disk drive, Imagewriter printer, MacWrite, MacPaint) expired on March 31. However, the BookCenter is still able to get bundled Macs at a slightly higher price through May 15. The new bundle prices are: \$ 2310 for the 512K Mac bundle and \$ 1888 for the 128K Mac bundle. Since the BookCenter's stock of 128K bundles was not totally depleted, there are still a few 128K Macintosh bundles available for \$ 1735.

Epson

Epson has lowered prices for many of their printers. The new prices are:

FX-80+	\$ 335	FX-100+	\$ 470
LX-80	\$ 205	LQ-1500	\$ 1066
JX-80	\$ 470	HI-80	\$ 365

Hewlett-Packard

Hewlett-Packard set a sales goal for the University to meet in order to keep our 45% hardware discount. Unfortunately, we did not meet our goal, so Hewlett-Packard has decreased our discount to 38% for hardware. The software discount remains unchanged at 50%. Those of you who are planning to buy either the Hewlett-Packard LaserJet laserprinter or the ThinkJet ink jet printer will be happy to know that the Bookcenter still has a few printers available at the old price (LaserJet: \$ 1999, ThinkJet: \$ 284). After these printers are sold, the LaserJet will cost \$ 2254 and the ThinkJet will cost \$ 320. Incidentally, Hewlett-Packard now makes the ThinkJet printer with an RS-232 serial interface as well as the Centronics parallel interface, the HP-IB interface, and the HP-IL interface.

Review:

WordStar 2000+

WordStar has been the word processing standard against which other packages are compared for the last three or four years. It has had the reputation of being very powerful but difficult to learn. WordStar 2000 (WS2000) is MicroPro's response to user demands and competition from other word processing packages such as WordPerfect, MicroSoft Word, and Volkswriter Deluxe. WordStar is available on a wide variety of microcomputer but WS2000 is only available for the IBM PC and compatibles. While files created with WS2000 and WordStar are two-way compatible (you can create a document with one and work on it with the other), the programs work quite differently.

Easier to learn

WordStar is a menu-driven program. Everything you can do is listed on one of seven menus. There is a startup menu followed by a main menu when you start editing a document. This menu lists the basic editing commands like cursor movements and deletion commands. From the main menu you can access five other menus for features such as moving blocks of text or special printing effects. As a result, most WordStar commands consist of three key-strokes: the control key, the key to select a menu, and finally the key for the command you want from that menu. WordStar menus are jam-packed, with 20-25 commands displayed in the top third of the screen, and it's not always intuitive which menu contains the command you want. WordStar 2000 menus follow a similar structure, but the organization is more logical and the menus themselves, while more numerous, have fewer options and are more comprehensible.

WordStar commands are *not* mnemonic (e.g., ^T to delete a word, ^QY to delete the line to the right of the cursor). WS2000 commands *are* mnemonic (e.g., ^RW to remove a word, ^RR to remove the line to the right of the cursor).

MicroPro has provided several aids for learning WS2000. There are two tutorial disks that provide about four hours of instruction, on-line help, a training guide, and a much improved reference manual.

New Features

WS2000 has expanded many of the features available in WordStar. In addition to removing words and lines, WS2000 allows you to remove sentences and paragraphs with a single command. The way you delete characters has been improved in WS2000: the Backspace key does a destructive backspace while the Delete key removes the character where the cursor is. This can be initially confusing for former WordStar users, but makes much more sense than the Del and ^G options.

Here are a few of the new features that have been added to WS2000:

- An undo command (^U) that reverses the previous editing command. Undo can be handy for cutting and pasting text. For example, you can remove a sentence, move the cursor, type ^U and the sentence will reappear at the cursor position.
- You can edit up to three files at one time, which makes it easy to move text between files.
- Paragraphs are reformed automatically.
- There is a calculator that can add a column of numbers.
- You can sort up to 50 lines of text alphabetically or numerically, in either ascending or descending order.
- Headers and footers can have more than one line.
- WS2000 has a typewriter mode for filling in forms and typing envelopes.
- It keeps track of footnotes, and prints them all at the end of the document. (MicroPro says they are working on printing them at the bottom of the page.)
- WS2000 recognizes DOS 2 path names, so you can access files in different directories.
- WS2000 supports more than sixty different printers.

MailMerge and Spelling Checker

MailMerge in WS2000 is much the same as MailMerge in WordStar, but you respond to a series of questions on the screen rather than enter dot commands into your document. The new spelling checker is very similar to CorrectStar. It provides a dictionary of 67,000 words and you can add up to 1500 new words in auxiliary dictionaries. In addition to checking the spelling in the entire document, you can check a single word, sentence, or paragraph.

2000+

With WordStar 2000+ you get three more programs: MailList, StarIndex, and TelMerge. MailList provides a form with 21 permanently-defined data fields (name, title, company, etc.) that you can use to create a mailing list file. It can sort using up to nine fields, and retrieve records selected by key fields. The resulting list is then used in MailMerge to generate mailing lists and labels. StarIndex enables you to

mark words for inclusion in an index or a table of contents. TelMerge is a communications package that allows you to communicate (through a modem) with another computer.

Drawbacks

WS2000 is a huge program that has traded speed for features. It comes on six disks (seven if you get 2000+), and takes more than 2M bytes of a hard disk. It was really written for a hard disk machine like the IBM PC/XT, AT, or Zenith Z-150 hard disk. If you put the WS2000 program on a 360K floppy disk, there is no room for DOS. To run WS2000 on floppy disk, you must boot the machine with the DOS disk, then remove this disk and insert your program disk. It takes more disk swapping to check spelling or use any of the Plus modules.

The program is also *very* slow on a floppy disk system. Even something as minor as a destructive backspace requires a disk access. On a hard disk WS2000's speed problems are less noticeable, but it is still obviously slower than the old WordStar.

Summary

WordStar 2000 is a slow, large, but very powerful program that is easier to learn and use than WordStar. If you have a hard disk, you should consider WordStar 2000. If you have floppy disks, come to the lab to try the program out first. The Minnesota Bookcenter carries WordStar (\$210.00) WordStar 2000 (\$297.00) and WordStar 2000+ (\$357.00). If you want to know more about WS2000, there is a pretty thorough review in the April 1985 issue of *PC World*.

Review:

Macintosh Data Base Packages

We have been besieged with questions concerning data base management systems for the Macintosh. This review covers the packages available for your inspection in the Micro Lab (125 Shepherd Labs). We plan to purchase other packages soon, and we will review them as they become available. This review will provide you with some basic information about data base packages, but to make sure that your needs will be met, we strongly recommend that you try them before making your decision to purchase one.

A data base management program is the computer-based equivalent of a 3 X 5 index card file. Each card contains information, organized into specific categories. Most data base packages use the following terminology. Each category on the card is called a **field**, each card is called a **record**, and the entire set of records is called a **data file** (or a data base). For example, an instructor can use a data base program to organize information about his students. A record would represent one student. Fields within each record would be categories such as student I.D. number, midquarter exam, final exam, and final grade.

Microsoft File by Microsoft Corporation

This package is organized so that entering information is like filling out boxes on a printed form. The program takes full advantage of the mouse and the Macintosh visual interface to allow the user to design and edit the data entry form and reports. It makes use of the Macintosh clipboard, so that information can be cut and pasted between Microsoft File and other programs. One of the nicer features of this program is that it allows you to cut and paste information from one character, one field, one record, or the entire file. Unlike some other data base packages, File supports all fonts and can print using the Imagewriter's high-quality mode. It can also support any size mailing label, since you pictorially design the dimensions yourself. File has the convenient feature of allowing you to enter the date and time into the designated fields with a single keystroke. The program provides extensive on-line help and the manual is excellent. Our general impression is that Microsoft File is a quality product.

FileVision by Telos Software Products

FileVision is a filing system that allows you to draw pictures and associate information with them. Therefore, it is useful for organizing information that is best understood when presented visually. For example, you could draw a map of the United States and store information (state capitol, population, major industry, etc.) within each state. To retrieve the information about one state you would double-click on the state. With the pull-down menus, you can select all states where agriculture is the major industry. These states would then be highlighted on your map. This isn't the package to use if you want to maintain a mailing list, but on the other hand, it is the only package we know of that associates information with graphics in this way.

pfs: file/report by Software Publishing Corporation

The pfs packages are probably the easiest packages to learn if you have never used a data base management system before and have relatively simple filing needs. Information is organized in forms that you design on the screen. After you have designed the form, you fill in the blanks. Like most other data base packages, pfs can be used to store and retrieve information in various categories and generate reports and mailing lists. The manual is pretty good, but no on-line help is available. pfs gives you the convenience of entering date and time into their designated fields with a single keystroke. With this package, you can select information stored in a particular field and transfer it to the Macintosh clipboard. Although you can cut and paste information on the limited field level, you cannot transfer entire records to other applications packages. The pfs programs print only draft quality output.

MegaFiler by Megahaus Corporation

This package comes with eight predefined data base file structures, such as a household inventory form, mailing list, and a checking account record. You can modify and customize these forms at will, or start from scratch and design your own. It allows up to three data base files to be displayed on the screen at the same time. Technically, you can move information from file to file using the clipboard. However, only one field can be cut or pasted at a time, so this can be a very cumbersome process. Somewhat bothersome is the fact that this package violates several Macintosh conventions, such as using command K instead of the standard command C for the keyboard equivalent of the copy command. MegaFiler has a very nice manual and the package is relatively easy to use. Adequate on-line help is available. We did encounter a problem while trying to print a mailing list. Megahaus has a toll-free phone number that we called and received a prompt and helpful reply. We later discovered that the solution could have been gleaned from the manual, if it were followed carefully. However, we think that the solution should have been more immediately obvious.

Main Street Filer by Main Street Software

Main Street Filer allows you to design and edit your data structure. You can design columnar reports, mailing lists, mailing labels, envelopes, or rolodex cards. There is no edit menu; therefore, you cannot use it to exchange information with other Macintosh programs. We found this program somewhat hard to learn and the manual was not as helpful as most other package's manuals. This program is adequate, but we cannot recommend it over other packages of this type.

OverVue by ProVUE Development

This data base program stores data in spreadsheet form (each record is a row and each field is a column). The data format is not fixed and can be altered after data is entered. OverVue provides nine different data types for presenting the information. Once you select one, it will check the entry for the correct type. Other similarities with spreadsheet programs are its math capabilities and its use of data from selected locations in the data sheet for calculations. OverVue has a preset report design but it allows you to create up to eight other custom report templates. It also supports any size mailing label. The size box is used for selecting the label size. This program is nice for data that can be stored in rows and columns. It is not set up to present a lot of text in the data sheet, and text is printed in draft mode only. One of OverVue's nice features is that the Clipboard can be used to transfer information from fields or records to other Macintosh software. The manual is well-organized and easy to follow.

1stBase by DeskTop Software Corporation

In this data base manager, a data structure is created on what is called a *blueprint*. The structure is not fixed, and changing it does not affect the data already entered. Entering data in the first record was simple but figuring out how to go to the next record took a while: Shift Return, Clicking in the scroll bar, or selecting Add Record from a menu. 1stBase can search for a string of characters but only the records from the current record to the end of the file are searched. This means that if you are not at the first record, some records will not be searched. With this package, you can select information stored in a particular field and transfer it to the Macintosh clipboard. Although you can cut and paste information field by field, you cannot transfer an entire record to the clipboard. 1stBase allows sorting on up to 10 fields. Writing reports and generating mailing labels is straightforward, but text is printed in draft mode only. You can print the entire data base or select only those records that match a certain condition. 1stBase can also merge data into letters. Reports generated by 1stBase can be edited using MacWrite. On-line help is available as an option for each menu. The manual is well-organized.

DBMaster by Stoneware, Inc.

The big disappointment with this program was the manual, which we found to be poorly written. Information is not presented in a logical manner and it was very hard to find answers to questions. The program has on-line help which is easier to understand than the manual but not adequate. This program may be useful for very large data bases. It is capable of storing the data that will not fit on one 3.5" disk on several disks, and can handle files as big as 20 megabytes on a hard disk. Designing the data structure is easy. Besides indicating the data type, you can also indicate fonts for the data being entered but you cannot print these fonts. DBMaster can use more than one field for sorting. Computed fields (like a spreadsheet) are a nice feature of this program. Printing reports is done by indicating the fields you want printed and their position on paper. The data can be sorted and specific records printed. Generally, we wouldn't recommend this package unless your data base file cannot fit on a single disk.

Factfinder by Forethought, Inc.

Factfinder is a free-format data base management system. When you use Factfinder, you do not define a structure for the data you are storing. Instead, you type information into *factsheets* and mark *keywords* in the factsheets. Your data base is a collection of factsheets. To retrieve information you tell Factfinder to display the factsheets containing one or more keywords. Each factsheet can contain up to about 10,000 characters if you have a 128K Mac, about 32,000 characters if you have a 512K Mac. FactFinder is well suited for storing and retrieving abstracts on the basis of keywords because the amount of information you store in a factsheet does not have a structure. Factfinder has a good on-line help facility. It is relatively easy to move information from Factfinder into MacWrite documents and back.

Summary

We recommend Microsoft File for conventional data base management needs such as mailing lists. Its capabilities are the most well-rounded of the packages we reviewed. We recommend FileVision for graphically-oriented data bases. Factfinder is the package of choice for applications where free-form data entry is required, rather than the structured format of most data base packages.

Cautions

Printing mailing labels with packages that support high quality output can be a little tricky because the software that allows you to use high quality print prepares an entire page before printing it. Getting the page length correct is critical to maintaining proper alignment across page boundaries. Packages that support only draft quality print output don't have this problem, since they do not prepare an entire page before printing. Even when everything was set up correctly, the packages which support high quality print would sometimes waste one label per page by skipping over it. None of the names on the mailing list were omitted, but the label waste was an irritation.

It is also important to emphasize that each of these packages has unique features that might make it suitable or unsuitable for your particular application. *When choosing a data base management system,*

there is no substitute for direct experience with the program. We encourage you to visit the Microcomputer Research Laboratory and try them yourself.

Announcement:

WordPerfect Demonstration

A member of the UCC Microcomputer Systems Group will give a demonstration of the WordPerfect word processing package for the IBM-PC at the Micro HelpLine. The demonstration will last about one hour and will cover basic capabilities of the WordPerfect package. The demonstration will be offered twice:

10:00 am April 24 (Wednesday)

10:00 am May 3 (Friday)

True-Life Microcomputer Comics:

Sally's Horrible Discovery



What a tragedy! A tragedy that is even worse because it was entirely avoidable. Sally knew she should make backups, but it seemed like *just too much trouble*. Alas, magnetic media is fragile. A stray magnetic field, dirt, dust, spilled coffee or coke, a program that runs amok, a cat that chews on disks... There are a multitude of ways in which disks can fail, and disks always fail at the **worst possible time**. Don't let it happen to you. Your work is too valuable to lose just because you don't make backup copies frequently. Avoid the **heartbreak of bad disks** by making frequent backups. Copy all important information onto another disk every half-hour or so. It only takes a few minutes, but it could save you a **lifetime of despair**.

the fine print: this issue of the Microcomputer Newsletter was prepared using the MacWrite, MacPaint, and MacDraw software on an Apple Macintosh, printed on the Apple LaserWriter, photocopied and sent to you. Our thanks to the Supercomputer Institute for the use of their ThunderScanner (used to digitize True-Life Microcomputer Comics into MacPaint format).

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