

BOOK REVIEW

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WORD PROCESSING FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

by Steven F. Jong

Group Technology, Ltd., P.O. Box 87

Check, VA 24072

1983, 190 pp., paper \$11.95 plus \$1 shipping

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Reviewed by D. Rosenthal*

This book describes word processing and the factors to consider in selecting a word processor for specific applications. The book assumes the reader has little or no familiarity with word processors or computers, but is also of possible interest to those who are somewhat knowledgeable about such matters. While the title implies small business applications, the contents should interest most chemists who wish to learn about word processors and perhaps wish to buy a word processor system.

The book consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1, entitled "You Too Can Profit from Word Processing" states that word processing is the most popular application of microcomputers, that a business letter costs \$14 to \$18 to produce and that word processing will reduce the cost of document production by one-third and the time involved by two-thirds. The four primary questions the book answers are (1) What can word processing do for you?, (2) What can't it do?, (3) What should you know before you buy?, and (4) What will it cost?.

Chapter 2 briefly describes typical hardware components (the display, screen, keyboard, printer, interfaces, disks and disk drives, memory and the CPU), and their characteristics. Some of these devices are illustrated through pictures. Chapter 3 describes word processing software and discusses in some detail the possible features of editors, formatters and printer control. The chapter includes consideration of hyphenation, spelling, mail-merge packages and user-friendly features like help facilities, menus, manuals, tutorials and courses. It points out that a particular software and hardware system will not have all of these features.

Chapter 4 describes hardware and Chapter 5 explains what software was available at the time the book was written. Part of this information is obsolete. Some of the hardware is no longer being manufactured and some new systems are now available. One or two pages are devoted to each item of hardware or software described. Tables summarize the features of much of the hardware and software.

Chapter 6 contains useful hints on selecting a system to suit your needs. It discusses the pros and cons of using microcomputers versus minicomputers for word processing. The author suggests making two lists, one of system requirements and the other of features that are desirable but not essential. Possible systems should be evaluated in terms of these requirements and desirable features. The minimum features deemed essential are: a fully assembled system having dual disk drives, a 12-inch monitor with 80 characters per line and 24-line capability, upper and lower case characters, a full office keyboard, plus shift, ESC, CTRL and cursor keys, at least 48k of memory, a letter quality printer, warranty and service contracts. The system must allow for growth; the software must capture all keystrokes must feature disk buffering; it must have word wrapping capability (that is, be able to split the line automatically by inserting a carriage return at the appropriate spot), character deletion/insertion capability; besides, the software must perform at least some on-screen formatting. Chapter 6 enumerates additional desirable features. The author indicates the steps that you should take in evaluating a system prior to purchase. The most important precept is that you must use and test the printer you want with the computer and software you propose to acquire before purchasing. This book gives a specific prescription on how to benchmark a system being considered for purchase.

The last chapter of this book (Chapter 7) predicts what's ahead for microcomputing: prices will come down; hardware and software will become more powerful and user-friendly.

One appendix contains seventeen general references. More than half relate to short articles in computer journals. The second appendix contains a glossary of terms.

The information contained in this book can be of value to anyone considering the purchase of a word processing system who does not already know very much about word processing and who is seeking advice.

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