▶ Windows 95 word processor and spreadsheet

Word, Excel usability gains entice users

Word for Windows 95 *By John Lombardi*

For many users, the most popular application in Microsoft Corp.'s Office 95 is Word for Windows 95. It has few major additions to its feature complement, but it has greatly improved

and enhanced its user interactions — with many wizards, tips, IntelliSense interactions, and other devices designed to make work easier. All these place Word 95 atop the word processing mountain.

I tested a solid late beta of the product and found that by and large the user interface appears similar to previous versions of Word for Windows, with the same menus and icons. Under the new suite integration system, however, Microsoft works hard to make the menu bars and icons look identical from product to product in the Office suite. Most of the new elements in this area reflect changes in the underlying operating system. For example, Word takes advantage of the Windows 95 file indexing system, which will index every file that matches a user-specified criterion (generally defined by the file type).

This version of Word has many automatic enhancements. It reviews your spelling as you type and underlines in red the words that don't have a match in the dictionary. You can either fix the word on the spot by typing the right spelling or by clicking the right mouse button for some suggestions from the speller, or you can wait until the end and go back and fix them all. Putting the corrections off doesn't work well with large documents or those with many unrecognized technical words; when the autospeller exceeds its limit, the program tells you to use the regular spell checker.

The AutoCorrect feature, which maintains a glossary of substitutes for abbreviations, is bigger and better. It fixes lots of dumb things we all do. For example, if you forget that

Caps Lock is on, Word 95 senses the problem and not only fixes the misprint but also turns Caps Lock off. Previously, if you typed two capital letters, such as *PC* or *TV*, Word immediately "corrected" this by putting the second letter in lower-case. Now Word 95 is smarter; it happily accepts *PC* and *TV* but not words with more than two initial caps. You can also create exception lists for words the program would normally fix, and you can turn the various elements on or off.

Another feature converts your

typing into special characters. So if you type c the program puts in a © symbol. The same holds for trademarks and the ™ symbol.

Some improvements are not quite so restrictive. Previously, when you formatted a paragraph one way and then the next one another way, if you deleted the paragraph symbol for the first paragraph, then you ended up with both paragraphs formatted like the second one. This is fixed in this version; when you delete the

paragraph mark the formatting stays the same. Find and replace now catches all word forms, including variants. If you change the word "buy" to "purchase," for example, Word 95 also changes "buys" to "purchases," and "buying" to "purchasing."

> The Help window has clickable regions with additional information.

Word 95 has a variety of workgroup features. There's a special mail mode that makes

> The spelling checker marks words it doesn't recognize as you type them.

Word 95 your mail editor for mail interfaces that are compliant with Microsoft's messaging API. Using Microsoft's OLE document sharing and linking, you can choose from various methods of organizing documents for review by multiple editors, mechanisms for providing editing permission to different users at different levels, and the like.

Opinion: ☺
Microsoft Word for Win95
Microsoft Corp., Redmond, Wash.
(800) 426-9400, (206) 882-8080; fax:
(206) 93-MSFAX

Price: $339, estimated retail; $109 to upgrade from any previous version or competitor until Dec. 31, $129 thereafter.
Platform: Windows 95, Windows NT
Pros: Greatly enhanced usability; automatic spelling aids.
Cons: Increased complexity.

Excel for Windows 95 *By Kelly Conatser*

For a minute there, things smelled a little fishy. At first glance, the Microsoft Corp. Excel for Windows 95 beta I tested looked suspiciously like its 16-bit predecessor, Excel 5. The same menus, the same file format. "People have enough on their minds upgrading to

Windows 95," Microsoft explained.

A likely story, I thought. But once again, the Excel product group has come up smelling like a rose. Below the surface, Excel 95 is filled with additional productivity features that are, with one major exception, brilliantly implemented.

Many of the improvements are so minor they seem trivial — until you find yourself using them over and over again. For example, there's the AutoComplete feature, which automatically finishes repetitive entries in a list.

One of the numerous small additions worth notice is the AutoFilter's new "Top 10" selection, which filters a list to show only the top 10 entries. (You can specify a different number of entries or look at the bottom of the list.) Another is the AutoCalculate feature, which displays the sum (or average, count, maximum, or minimum) of the currently selected cells in the status bar, allowing you to do quick calculations without writing formulas.

Large-scale additions are also simple — yet so solid that you'll wonder how you've been getting along without them. The new template wizard helps you quickly design your own template file and then create a database file — in Excel, Microsoft Access or FoxPro, or Borland Inter-

national Inc.'s dBase or Paradox format — to store data from the template. This feature will even create such a database for template files created in previous versions.

The Shared List feature allows multiple users simultaneous access

> The AutoFilter's new "Top 10" feature will be a hit with Letterman fans—and anyone who hates sorting.

to the same workbook and provides an avenue for addressing conflicts that arise, although it doesn't have the advanced security and workgroup features found in Lotus Development Corp.'s 1-2-3.

The new AccessLinks feature lets you bypass Excel's primitive Data Form command in favor of the Access form designer. Once you've created the form you can scroll through records from your Excel list or enter new ones the same way you would if the form were linked to an Access table.

AccessLinks also con-

nects you to Access' report designer. Most impressive, though, is the Convert To Access command, which allows you to convert a table of data in your worksheet into more efficient relational tables that can be used by Access or other database applications. You can specify the table structure yourself or let the program do it for you.

Ironically, Excel's most visible new feature, the Data Map add-in, is also its weakest. Like the Lotus Maps feature introduced in 1-2-3 for Windows last summer, Data Map provides basic maps and demographic data for the world, with slightly more detailed information available for North America, Australia, and Europe.

As you might expect, Data Map surpasses the older Lotus Maps in several respects. You can zoom a map, add custom "pins," and combine several themes, such as graduated symbols and dot density, with the more typical color shading theme. However, many of these features are uncharacteristically cumbersome. Zooming, resizing, and refreshing map data are all more difficult to accomplish than you would expect in a product in which most other tasks seem so effortless.

In addition to its innovations, Excel 95 includes some improvements to existing features. The infamous numeric formatting dialog box has finally been tamed. Pivot table caching has been optimized to require 45 percent less RAM. And VBA, the programming language that has stopped many macro mavens in their tracks, has gotten somewhat gentler with the addition of a more sophisticated help system featuring additional sample code.

The few other areas in which Excel could use a major overhaul have been left alone for now. The scenario manager, for example, is still weak. But Excel 95's new features and speed improvements provide plenty of reasons to upgrade.

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Opinion: ☺
Microsoft Excel for Win95
Microsoft Corp.

Price: $339, estimated retail; $109 to upgrade from any previous version or competitor until Dec. 31, $129 thereafter.
Platform: Windows 95, Windows NT
Pros: New productivity features enhance the leading spreadsheet package.
Cons: Mapping add-in is unpredictable and difficult to use.

Opinions
☺ Buy it!
☺ Worth a look
☹ Nope