Wrestling with Word Processors:  

Word vs. WordPerfect  
By Seana Lane

While teaching Word for WordPerfect converts, I have been asked many times: “Is the campus switching over? Well, which one should I use?” First, the campus is not “switching over” to Word—we are licensed for both word processing programs, and will endeavor to remain so (though unforeseeable events may impact that endeavor, such as the sale of one or the other product’s company, etc.).

Second, which word processing application you use is largely a matter of personal preference—both Word and WordPerfect can perform essentially the same tasks, and produce essentially the same documents, though some commands and processes will be slightly different. One consideration is, however, market share: Word has 90% of the market, which means, (whether you like how it got there or not), that many documents you are likely to receive from others will be in Word format.

WordPerfect is preferred in the legal professions for its accurate numbering of paragraphs, according to Joel Wilensky (1997), director of technology for the Nassau County Bar Association. He also notes that the margin features are easier to use than in Word. Finally, Wilensky notes that the shadow cursor is a feature missing from Word. This feature permits a user to click anywhere on the page and begin typing, while in Word, you must use a hard return or page break to type farther down the page or document.

Word, is preferred by professional writers because of its extensive style and template building functions, its paragraph oriented (instead of word oriented) structure, and its complexity—some of the features that are specifically mentioned by the anti-Word camp as negatives. There seems to be general agreement that Word is a more powerful desktop publishing application for those who need to create indexes, tables of content, and import graphics.

If industry ratings and testing are any indication, the two products are relatively closely matched: PC World (1998) rated WordPerfect 6.4 out of 10, while Word received a 7.5 rating. PC Magazine Online (1998) asked for its readers’ opinions of the two product suites, and the overall satisfaction with the Corel WordPerfect Suite 8 and the Microsoft Office 97 suite was 8.6/10 for each. IPFW’s computer labs show similar results in actual usage: Kettler Hall’s Open-Access Computing Labs showed a Word to WordPerfect ratio of 1.12:1 in time of use over a period of 40 days this semester.

So which should you use? Consider your document needs, the dominant program used in your office environment, and your current comfort level with either program when making your decision—but I would recommend, whatever your choice, that you become familiar with the basics (opening, editing, and printing files) of the other program as well.

Coming Attractions

Summer 1999...

Help Desk
Moving to new 2nd floor Kettler location

Software Upgrades
Matlab 11* SPSS 9.0
Maple 5.1 Adobe Acrobat 4.0
Adobe Pagemaker 6.5*

* In Open-Access Labs currently offering this software

Testing of Personal Usernames in Labs
Students can optionally begin using personal student computing usernames to log into Open-Access Lab computers. (see Page 2)

Fall 1999...

Student access to computers in the Open-Access Labs will require the use of personal login IDs.

6 station - 24 hour computer lab outside Helmke Library in the student lounge.
New Adaptive Software for Students with Disabilities

Joint efforts from Services for Students with Disabilities and IT Services will result in new software installed in all Open-Access labs for the use of students with disabilities. ViaVoice and Dragon Naturally Speaking are voice-recognition applications that will permit users to dictate into almost any Windows application. ZoomText will magnify parts of the desktop up to six times for easier viewing as well as read commands or menu items to students. This software installation is currently in the testing and documentation stage, but will be ready for use in the labs by the fall semester. Additionally, Services for Students with Disabilities maintains a closed lab with the adaptive software installed on 3 similar workstations.

Mail Server Trash Activation

Beginning in May, your cc:Mail E-mail server will initiate a weekly trash collection. Once you enable the trash option from the tools menu, all items stored in the trash container that are 7 days old from the date of origin will be permanently deleted by the mail server. For complete details see the IT Services Web site: http://www.its.ipfw.edu/faqs/trash.html

Leaving Town?

Reminder: If you subscribe to an Internet mailing list and will not be reading your e-mail over the summer, it would be a good idea to unsubscribe. Failure to do so could potentially overload the servers and leave you with hundreds of messages to read in August. Lists vary in their signoff or unsubscribe procedures so you may need to refer to the instructions for your particular list. In the fall you can easily re-subscribe. If you have any questions contact the Help Desk at ext. 6030 or check the Web site: http://www.its.ipfw.edu/fac-staff/listserv_signoff.

Open-Access Lab Login Requires Personal Username in Fall

Starting this fall, users of the open-access labs will need to login using their IPFW student computing usernames and passwords. This security enhancement will help ensure the labs are being used by legitimate students, provide for user accountability, and optionally offer direct access to personal Web directories. Testing of the new system will begin this summer.

Web Works: Powerful Pedagogy

The PBS teleconference, "Innovative Uses of the Web to Enhance Learning," drew a crowd of 20 for discussion of issues like reaching different kinds of learners via the Web and how to use technology to enhance learning with non-technical students or students without Internet experience.

If you were unable to attend the conference, you may check out the video and participant packet from Helmke Library, where those materials have been placed on two-day reserve at the Service Desk.

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2101 E. Coliseum Blvd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46805
(219) 481-6031
Editor: Pamela Zepp
E-mail: ZeppP@ipfw.edu
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