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Norton Textra: Word Processing for Composition Classes 2

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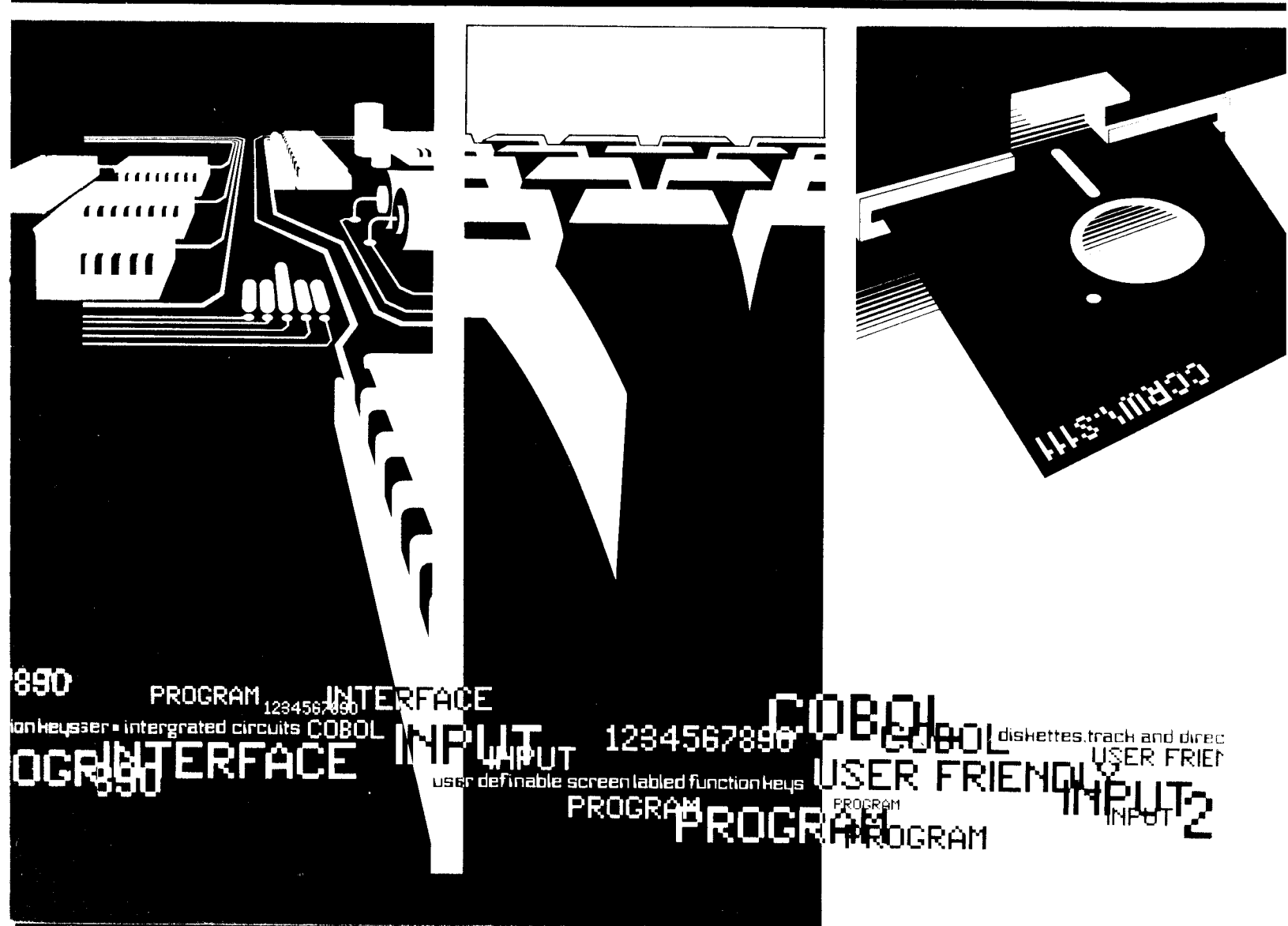
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Norton Textra: Word Processing for Composition Classes

Thomas A. Maik

With the recent release of *Norton Textra* for use in college composition courses, word processing takes another giant step forward. Developed by Scott Anderson and the programmers at Ann Arbor Software, with Myron Tuman of the University of Alabama, this new software combines an easy-to-use word processing program with a unique feature instructors of composition will enthusiastically welcome: an on-screen Handbook featuring components in rhetoric, grammar and usage. The program comes in three versions—two of which accompany Norton texts: a stand-alone version which students and I beta tested; a version which corresponds to *Writing: A College Handbook*, second edition, by James A.W. Heffernan and John E. Lincoln; and a version corresponding to *The Confident Writer*, second edition, by Constance J. Gefvert. The latter two contain cross-references to their respective texts in *Textra's* online handbook.

Ease of use certainly must be one of the key features in *Norton Textra*. As an enthusiastic advocate of word processing in the composition classroom for several years and a past user of *Volkswriter* and *PC-Write*, I find *Norton Textra* to be easier to use than either of those two word processing programs, and my students (juniors and seniors in an advanced professional writing class who had limited knowledge of word processing before my class) who also tested the software found it easy to use. Although a manual will accompany the released version, my students and I had none in our beta testing of the software. Although the manual might have been useful at times, we actually didn't need it since the on-screen tutorials are designed for various user levels.

I've found that students usually need a minimum of two to three sessions of hands-on instruction to use *PC-Write*; with *Textra*, students need minimal class time or hands-on training. In fact, by using any one of the nine "film-on-disk" introductory tutorials (my students who tested the software found path 2—the short film-on-disk tutorial as particularly helpful), students can teach themselves how to use the software and be creating and editing their own files within a very short time.

Features of *Norton Textra* that are especially useful include the ease of retrieving and editing documents by merely citing the appropriate number from the directory list of files rather than spelling the title, the automatic directory title list immediately upon entering the program, and the extensive help available through the bottom help screens when editing files.

I particularly found the windows to the Handbook helpful when writing; this feature should certainly be helpful to students who need to check grammar, punctuation, mechanics and usage while composing at the computer. Students now should have no excuses ("I lost my Handbook." "The Handbook is hard to use." "I didn't have time to check problem areas of my paper with the Handbook.") for not carefully proofreading their papers since it's incredibly simple to call up the Handbook. At any point in the composing process and usually with a single keystroke, students can instantly get the help they need by using the onscreen Handbook. A definite plus for the instructor (but a possible minus for students since they feel overwhelmed) is the abundance of information available with the on-screen Handbook, but even here the divisions of editing symbols, mechanics, punctuation, grammar,

sentences, usage glossary and documentation are both easy to access and use. Furthermore, the explanations are brief, clear, and to the point. For example, the Handbook lists four rules for comma use: 1. between two independent clauses joined by one of seven [BOY FANS] coordinating conjunctions; 2. after introductory material that is either lengthy or interrupts the flow of the sentence; 3. between coordinate items in a series; 4. before and after parenthetical material; and then adds the supplementary observation—as called for according to convention or to prevent misreading. Students should also find the Handbook examples illustrating the rules to be particularly helpful.

Another feature of the on-screen Handbook that should be particularly useful to composition instructors is the extensive list of editing symbols. Instructors approaching writing as process will find this section valuable since they can mark the "hard copy" of the students' papers using these symbols, return the papers to the students who can then compare their computer file copy with the annotated hard copy, check their errors by using the on-screen Handbook, and then make the necessary corrections and revisions on file before turning in a final hard copy. Ideally, I have always encouraged students to check their errors when I returned papers; however, realistically I know that many, many of the students don't do that because of reasons listed above—checking takes too much time, the text Handbook is too cumbersome to use, etc. From actual classroom experience, I know that students find the technology of computers and word processing exciting, easy to use, and also fun; those same facets of the technology—the excitement, ease of use and enjoyment of word processing—should be just as applicable in using the on-screen Handbook. Most composition instructors who use word processing know students find writing less of a drudgery because of the technology. If it's possible (and I believe it is with *Norton Textra*), the on-screen Handbook brings two of our profession's long-sought goals closer to fruition: a positive experience about writing and perfection of writing skills.

One feature I did not like about *Norton Textra* was the "frozen" cursor upon entry into a new file. Occasionally I like to start some documents several lines down from the top of the page or in the middle of the page, but that is impossible since the cursor was "locked" near the top of the screen until text was created in the file. In conjunction with that annoyance, when reviewing and revising text within a file, I found it somewhat difficult to manipulate the cursor freely within the text; my students had similar problems moving the cursor freely within their text. Because the version of *Textra* my students and I used was for beta testing of the software, the final version of *Textra* very likely will

be "debugged" and users should not encounter these cursor problems.

Since I use word processing in an upper-level writing class, some of my writing projects include assignments where underlining, bold facing, doublewide and other enhancements are useful, if not necessary. With *Norton Textra*, I found some of these enhancements difficult and others not available with this version. For example, I'm accustomed to underlining text at the time of composing; with *Norton Textra* I must first compose the text and then go back and underline it. This two-step procedure is somewhat cumbersome. I had similar difficulty using the highlighting or bold facing feature which I occasionally like my students to use. Furthermore, enhancements such as double-wide and italics are currently not available with this version of *Textra*.

Since I do not use research assignments in my upper-level writing class, I did not use the printed documentation section; however, that section again should be helpful to instructors, particularly those teaching freshman composition, who teach research skills and procedures.

Some of my students had problems arranging page layouts and printing their text while other students had no difficulty. I, too, experienced some difficulty with page layouts for printing—text which should have been on one page but wasn't and numbers for pages appeared at inappropriate places. Frequently, I found myself printing a file several times before I got the hard copy that suited me.

Nonetheless, advantages of *Norton Textra* far outweigh the disadvantages and inconvenience of the software. For an extremely easy-to-use word processing program combined with an on-screen Handbook, *Norton Textra* will cost students a rather modest \$19.95. In addition, purchasers of the software are eligible for the Software Registration Plan entitling them to a periodic Newsletter describing enhancements and revisions planned for *Textra*; software revisions and enhancements available to registrants at reduced prices for four years from the date of registration; and immediate replacement of defective *Textra* diskettes. In addition, *Norton Textra Speller*, a dictionary with 75,000 entries, will be available separately for \$12.95.

Having pointed out some of my concerns regarding *Norton Textra*, my overall impression, however, is most positive. In summation, I like the software very much. As I indicated, the software is the easiest word processing program I've used to date! In most cases, because of the on-screen tutorials (ranked according to each user's skill level and knowledge of word pro-

cessing), students should be able to teach themselves within an hour or so how to use the software. The feature I like best about this software is the online Handbook; this feature will certainly make the teaching of writing easier. For classes approaching writing as process, this feature is mandatory since students can easily check their critiqued hard copy against the online editing symbols and then get expert reference help through pertinent online sections of the Handbook. This feature, with its ease of use, clear but brief explanations, and helpful examples, is like having the instructor or one's private tutor within arm's length.

Because of its ease and simplicity, *Norton Textra*, I'm convinced, does a better job of what earlier and more primitive word processing programs have done for our discipline: aids instructors in the teaching of writing, removes for students the drudgery and anathema of writing, and actually enhances the often neglected aspect of writing done in long hand, namely editing and revising. The marvel of this software, however, is the Handbook; with it *Norton Textra* brings the potential for refining and perfecting writing skills closer to realization.

Thomas A. Maik is a Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse, LaCrosse, WI 54601.

Conference on College Learning Assistance Centers

Sponsored by Long Island University, the Tenth National Conference on College Learning Assistance Centers will be May 11 and May 13, 1988, in Brooklyn, New York. A wide range of exhibits, software demonstrations, and papers will address central issues in learning-assistance centers, including word processing in writing. Contact Elaine Caputo, Conference Chairperson, Learning Center Conference, Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus, University Plaza, Brooklyn, NY 11201, or call (718) 403-1020.

Society for Technical Communication Conference

Sponsored by the Society for Technical Communication, the 35th International Technical Communication Conference, "Freedom to Communicate," will meet in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 10-13, 1988. Sessions will include ■ CD ROM Publishing, New Breakthrough in Technical Communication ■ Hypertext: New Challenges and Roles for Technical Communicators ■ Electronic Publishing: Mainframe, Mini, PC based ■ From Database to Electronic to Hypertext: Successes and Deadends ■ Converting to a Desktop Publishing System ■ A Writer's Point of View on Designing Electronic Publishing ■ Beyond Desktop Publishing: Document Development and Change Tools ■ Electronic Publishing: Making It Work for You ■ Electronic Publishing: A Blend of Hardware and Software ■ Solving Your Problems in Desktop Publishing ■ Strategies for Desktop Publishing, Cost Justifying, Networking, & Implementing ■ After Purchasing Desktop Publishing ■ Desktop Publishing: Making the Right Choices Concerning Others ■ Computers and Composing and ■ Traditional and Desktop Publishing: Complements and Complications. Contact the Society for Technical Communication, 815 15th Street N.W., Washington, DC 20005, or call (202) 737-0035.

Desktop Publishing Conference in May

Publish! and *Folio* will be sponsoring "The Folio:Show" on desktop publishing in New York City on May 23-27, 1988. The theme of the conference is "Face to Face." A wide range of seminars beyond desktop publishing are also being offered, focusing on various aspects of magazine and book writing and publishing: management, ad/sales marketing, editorial, production, design, circulation, and directory publishing. In addition, user group roundtables and tutorials are being offered for the most popular desktop-publishing software. Contact The Folio:Show/Spring, Six River Bend, Stamford, CT 06907-0949, or call (203) 357-9014.

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- "As for special text effects, you can rotate text, print it in gray scale, and even convert it to a bit-mapped or object-oriented graphic (the latter option lets you stretch and scale text for special effects). Now that most desktop publishing programs can flow text around irregular graphics, Scoop goes them one better by letting you set diagonal margins. You can even vary the degree of raggedness at the margin by adding space between letters and words, a technique normally used only in fully justified text." (p. 169)*
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"...the Shakespeare Disk Program should enable research as follows: Comparing the vocabularies of plays, analyzing imagery based on words of your choice, comparing vocabularies of Shakespeare's plays with different authors (non-Shakespearean plays will be programmed shortly at Oxford), trace similarities or differences between different authors, finding remnants of proverbs, examining Shakespeare's vocabularies in different plays by period or type, checking use of vocabulary and figures of speech from scene to scene to see if Shakespeare is growing or decreasing in enthusiasm as he continues to write the play, entering topical lists of terms and asking the computer to search for them by period or play, doing studies of Shakespeare's style in different periods of his life, comparing the vocabulary of a Shakespeare text to trace a relationship with a known or suspected source, creating vocabulary profiles from play to play-poem to poem, checking the contexts of particular words to make intelligent decisions for a needed emendation, assisting variorum editors, checking the vocabulary of passages thought to be collaborative, checking, or selecting cross-references for any purpose, finding needed quotations, checking textual emendations, documenting Shakespeare's repetition of words or ideas, noticing how he uses language to reinforce his ideas, checking word distribution, finding frequency patterns, making it possible to come to conclusions based on all the evidence rather than some of it, studying Shakespeare's grammar, solving disputed authorship problems via vocabulary ideas and imagery studies, checking entrances and exits, stage business, and stage directions, and more." (p. 44)

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- It should not be overlooked that For Comment also provides an excellent vehicle for an author to review and comment on his own writing. As a first reviewer, the author can also use the notepad to make notes on alternative ideas or possible revisions."** (p. 58)
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Oberlin Conference on Computers and the Humanities

The conference "Teaching Computers and the Humanities Courses," sponsored by the Association for Computers and the Humanities at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, will be held June 16-18, 1988, and not June 9-11 as originally scheduled. Contact Robert Tannenbaum, Dept. of Computer Science, Hunter College CUNY, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

Beyond Word Processing—Text Management Programs

Mauro G. Di Pasquale, M.D.

The most exciting new features of the top word processors, such as *Microsoft Word 4.0*, *Nota Bene 3.0*, and *WordPerfect 5.0*, are their document management and retrieval capabilities. Although such new features give these programs an added dimension, the features (except in *Nota Bene*) are not as useful or as powerful as they might be. For example, although the new *Microsoft Word 4.0* now lets you retrieve files using keywords—or strings of text—linked by Boolean logic commands, you can't retrieve or otherwise manipulate the text of the files listed in the document retrieval window.

The capabilities of *Word's* new file-retrieval system are similar to those of a program called *Zoo Keeper*, which can be used to find files on a hard disk. *Zoo Keeper* is memory-resident and works through keywords (up to three are allowed) that you assign to each file. You search for the file you want by entering one or more of the three keywords. By using file macros, you can load an application program along with the file selected. *Zoo Keeper*, although an excellent little program (it does all it's billed to do: retrieve file names, plus up to forty characters in comments, quickly and efficiently), suffers from the same drawback as *Word's* file retrieval feature—it doesn't allow you to manipulate the information in the files.

Finding a file or list of files which conforms with the search pattern (and hopefully containing the information you're 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 most word processors' integrated text-management features.

If you want the ability to retrieve text from files that meet a certain search criterion, you have to look to one of the dedicated text management programs. Many of these programs offer quick and painless cut and paste features and a few are memory resident so that they can be used within your favorite word processor.

Of course, one could argue that DOS itself has the ability to search for text strings—the process, however, is awkward and tedious. With the DOS Find

command you have to know where the file is before you can search for a certain piece of text, a procedure that is not much of an improvement on the search options offered by most word processors (and certainly not as good as those offered by *Nota Bene*, *Microsoft Word* and *WordPerfect*).

Multi-purpose utility programs such as *Norton's Utilities*, *PC Tools*, *Nathan's Utilities*, and *Mace Utilities* allow you more flexibility in searching for and retrieving a specific text string; however, they are too slow for any but the smallest text databases.

There is today a need for more sophisticated text management programs, mostly because of cheaper storage memory (hard disks holding thousands of files are becoming the norm rather than the exception, and then there're the new CD-ROMs with their entire reference libraries on disks) and partly because the users of micros are becoming more sophisticated and looking for ways to make better use of their text databases. On line databases such as Dialog, BRS, CompuServe, etc., and the new optical scanners, are allowing the accumulation of large personal text databases, which are otherwise difficult to organize and manage effectively.

In the last few years, dozens of programs have appeared to take up the challenge. Although all text management programs have the ability to search files for text strings and to retrieve text, some are more capable and have more features than others.

In all these programs, searching for text is done either by using keywords or by full text searches. Keywords describe groups and classes of information. A proper selection of keywords will allow you to find only those items meeting specific search criteria. Rather than relying on highly specific keywords to narrow the scope of a search, most text management programs allow the use of the AND, OR and NOT Boolean functions to narrow the scope of a search.

Also, within each search technique there are these basic methods of conducting the searches:

1. **By simple text in which all occurrences of the word specified are searched for.** These searches are done by comparing the search string to the text. This technique is somewhat comparable to the search and replace function of a word processor.

2. **Range searches in which the search parameters are specified as being within certain ranges.** These searches allow a refinement in the search parameters and help to exclude related patterns which may confuse the picture.
3. **Boolean searches which use Boolean logic operators such as AND, OR and NOT to expand or narrow the range of the search.** Linking search words with AND narrows the range of a search, whereas linking them with an OR broadens a search. NOT is used to qualify AND and OR, excluding particular keywords.

Perhaps the simplest way to bring some order to this rather chaotic subject is to separate the text management programs into two categories. The first category contains the search-and-retrieval programs. These are divided into non-indexing programs and indexing programs.

Free-Form Text Retrieval Programs *Dagnet, Electra Find, Gofer, and Golden Retriever*

Of all the text retrieval systems, the simplest and easiest to use are the ones that search for specified text strings in a free form manner. The advantages of these programs are that they require very little space on your hard disk (since they work with the native files of any word processor), and allow adding material to or deleting material from the text base without concern for its order and without having to re-index files that have been changed. However, because the computer must examine the entire text sequentially in order to determine which portions must be retrieved, the search process is time consuming. Thus, these programs should only be used with smaller text databases or for text bases in which individual files are constantly changing.

Examples of free-form text-retrieval programs are *Dagnet, Electra Find, Gofer, and Golden Retriever*. All four programs work directly with the native files of most word processors—and also allow you to search the text portions of databases and spreadsheets, although this feature has limited retrieval capabilities.

Of these four programs, the two I find most useful are *Gofer* and *Golden Retriever*. *Golden Retriever* is useful mainly because of its unique pattern recognition technique, by which it is able to find not only exact matches to search strings, but similar words and even phrases, making it useful when you don't know the correct spelling of a word or the exact sequence of a phrase that you're looking for. It's ideal for searching

and retrieving material from OCR-generated text that has less than a 90% accuracy rate. This feature is more intelligent than *Electra Find's* ability to find phonetic variations. Unfortunately, *Golden Retriever* and *Electra Find* do not allow searches using Boolean operators (*Gofer* and *Dagnet* do).

Unlike the file-retrieval feature in *Microsoft Word*, *Golden Retriever's* allows you to broaden out your search automatically. Thus, you can specify the search to be performed on a single file, files with the same extension, files with the same name but in different directories, all files with the same extension across a directory and all its subdirectories, or files created on/before/after a certain date. After you have examined the results, it allows you to save all the findings, or move portions of the files into other files. *Golden Retriever* can be memory-resident (the way I usually use it) or it can be used as a stand-alone program.

Gofer is memory-resident, allows Boolean operators, and is faster than the others (up to one megabyte per minute is claimed by the company). Its cut-and-paste features are powerful and flexible, and allow you to even run the program unattended once you set up a specific search—all the results of the search are saved automatically to a pre-specified file (experience using the Boolean operators will allow you to make full use of this time-saving feature).

Gofer's compression and decompression features allow you to compress your files to about 50% of their original size and to quickly decompress one or more files as you need them. Since *Gofer* is able to search these compressed files, and retrieve text from them, there is usually little need to decompress the files. *Gofer's* limitations are mainly those of the non-indexing search-and-retrieval programs. Overall, it's an excellent program with impressive capabilities.

Dagnet runs under *Microsoft Windows* and, therefore, supports mice (the only program of this group to do either one), allows Boolean operators, runs in background mode, can directly view database and spreadsheet files, and overall has more features than the others; but it requires more effort to learn and use. However, it's effort well spent if you need any of its unique features.

Index-Based Search and Retrieval Programs *Memory Lane, SearchExpress, WordCruncher, and ZyIndex*

Index-based search and retrieval programs require you to index documents, turning the text into keywords, which the program uses to quickly locate text. These

programs are much faster than the non-indexing programs but because they require indexing (and re-indexing if the files are changed significantly) of files before the files can be searched, they are better suited to large text bases that are relatively static. Another drawback of some of the index-based programs is the limit to the number of words that can be indexed. Apparently, however, this limit is not usually a problem unless the files contain large amounts of misspelled text (as in some OCR-generated text) or if there are a lot of numbers in the text base).

Of the many offerings in this category, the four best are *Memory Lane*, *SearchExpress*, *WordCruncher*, and *ZyIndex*. *SearchExpress*, *WordCruncher* and *ZyIndex* support Boolean logic and proximity searching and are more powerful than *Memory Lane* (although *Memory Lane* allows you to restrict your searches to certain groups of files). *SearchExpress*, *ZyIndex* and *WordCruncher* are best used with relatively static files since it is necessary to update and re-index files that have been changed (information either added or deleted) and index any new files. *Memory Lane*, on the other hand, while not as powerful (it has limited Boolean search capabilities—useful only in selecting the files to be searched) is memory resident (it can also be run as a stand-alone program), and monitors all file activity. It automatically indexes new files and re-indexes files that have been changed. Another plus for *Memory Lane* is its ability to do both indexed and unindexed searches. For those with limited search needs, but who wish the speed of the index-based search-and-retrieval programs, without the bother of continually updating files, *Memory Lane* might be their best bet.

Like *Memory Lane*, but unlike the other two full indexing programs, *ZyIndex* can use the native files of most word processors for indexing and searching (*SearchExpress* and *WordCruncher* prefer ASCII files). Four versions of *ZyIndex* are on the market, ranging from their new \$99.00 program (*ZyIndex Personal*) which would be suitable for text databases of up to 325 files (although each file can be up to 300 pages in length), to the *Plus* version, which is capable of indexing up to 15,000 files (of up to 300 pages each) and supports networking and multi-user workstations.

Early this year, Zylab released *ZyFeatures*, a *ZyIndex* add-on product which boosts *ZyIndex*'s search capabilities. *ZyFeatures* gives *ZyIndex* the ability to present unstructured data in a structured format and allows you to define records and fields in a free form search. While *askSam* need not feel threatened, *ZyFeatures* does give *ZyIndex* more scope and sophistication. *ZyFeatures* also includes a 20,000 word thesaurus, giving you the capability to refine your searches by using synonyms, and macro facilities, allowing you to automate complex, frequently used search requests.

ZyIndex (with or without *ZyFeatures*) is an exceptional program: it's fast, powerful, and extremely easy to learn and use.

Both *SearchExpress* and *WordCruncher* are more sophisticated and powerful than *ZyIndex*; but unlike *ZyIndex*, both programs keep the data in their own files rather than working with existing text files (the new version of *SearchExpress* does allow the use of native files in its RAM resident mode), and both require more time and effort to use effectively.

Although I've listed *WordCruncher* with the other text retrieval programs, it really belongs in a class by itself. As well as indexing and retrieving text and files, *WordCruncher*, by creating concordances, also allows you to sort, manipulate and analyze text. For example, you can generate statistical information about word and distribution frequencies, and sort words by frequency and suffix.

Unlike *ZyIndex*, and the text retrieval feature of *Nota Bene* (well suited for working with hundreds and even thousands of files of varying sizes), *WordCruncher* is better used for indexing and manipulating large documents (such as books and material obtained from databases or generated by OCRs), but with some prior preparation, can also be used for any size and number of documents.

Because *WordCruncher* can do so much, it takes a few hours to become fluent in its main features. The manual, at first, is intimidating, but once you become familiar with the layout and the terms (which I found far from intuitive) you'll find it thorough and helpful, although at times a bit confusing.

WordCruncher consists of two separate parts, *IndexETC* and *ViewETC*. *IndexETC* is used to pre-index specified files (preferably in ASCII format) and to generate concordances. The resulting concordance can then be used by *ViewETC* to search for and retrieve, and analyze text in the indexed files.

For those who prefer *WordPerfect* over other word processors, *WordCruncher* can be integrated with *WordPerfect* and, therefore, might tip the scales in its favor. For scholars, because of its special features (such as the ability to index foreign languages, to create concordance files and book-style indexes), *WordCruncher* is preferred over other retrieval programs.

SearchExpress has several advanced features which makes it the program of choice for those with very large files, and for those who need to index and retrieve text, spreadsheets, databases, CAD/CAM drawings, and other images. With its hypertext

feature, any related documents can be linked together for recall with a single keystroke. The new version of *SearchExpress* features a RAM resident mode of operation which allows the direct access of *SearchExpress* from within most word processors, and the use of native files. As well as the version for magnetic media, it also comes in a version for CD-ROM and WORM laser drives. Overall, *SearchExpress* is an extremely sophisticated and powerful text search-and-retrieval program, with many features not found in the other programs.

Text-Orientated Database Management Programs *askSam*, *Memory Mate*, *SquareNote*, *Tornado Notes*, and *Tracker*

The second category of text-management systems are the text-orientated database-management programs. While both the text-orientated database management programs and the text-retrieval systems work with text and can find and retrieve specific information, they go about it differently. Text-retrieval systems, such as those mentioned above, organize and catalogue pre-created documents, but (except for *WordCruncher's* ability to manipulate its concordance) do not allow you to add information, massage the text, or generate reports. In short, with a text database system you can manipulate the text much as you would manipulate words and figures in a traditional database.

Traditional flat file and relational databases are unsuited to handling large amounts of text because the information that they can manipulate must be highly formatted—separated into relatively fixed and distinct chunks of information (records, fields, and files). And although many of these programs do provide long text fields, these text fields usually cannot be searched or indexed. Of the traditional databases the one program which comes closest is *Rbase System V* with its searchable note field. However, even with this feature, *Rbase*, and all traditional databases, are poor choices for managing a text database.

The solution for effectively managing a text database lies in a combination of database and word processing functions such as is seen in the five programs below. These programs all encourage ad hoc or structured entry and retrieval of information. Unlike the text retrieval programs, the text-based management systems include built-in editors, report generators, and the ability to structure text along predefined parameters. All five programs let you enter any kind of data anywhere within a record. These records can be of any length and contain any kind of information.

Of the five, the most sophisticated and powerful is *askSam*. *SquareNote*, on the other hand, is an inexpensive alternative to *askSam*, with admirable text handling and retrieving capabilities. The two memory-resident programs, *Memory Mate* and *Tornado Notes*, are useful as super memory-resident notepads. The fifth program, *Tracker*, is an excellent information tracking program, but is limited in its abilities to handle large text databases.

Memory Mate had its origins in a shareware program called *Instant Recall*. Broderbund purchased the program, improved it, and advertised it widely as "The free form way to remember everything, and find it fast," and as a "new breed of data manager that reduces your paper clutter and takes the mess off your desk."

Memory Mate, however, can be used for much more than just a super notepad; although it does an admirable job of organizing and restoring some order into all that miscellaneous information that inevitably accumulates on our desk and in our minds. Its abilities to cut and paste between applications, its reminder tickler, and its ability to handle free form text make it an excellent free form text database for miscellaneous pieces of information. It has serious limitations, however, in handling truly large amounts of text (it lacks a report generator, and imposes limitations on record length which limits its usefulness as a comprehensive retrieval system).

Although *Memory Mate* is more powerful than other desktop organizers (it is a true text database system and as powerful as most except for the limitations mentioned above), you may find that the memory-resident utility *Tornado Notes* is a better choice (unless you really do need all the power of *Memory Mate*). *Tornado Notes* requires less RAM and is easier to use and learn. *Tornado Notes* offers computerized notepads for storing reminders, can cut and paste between applications (although not as sophisticated as *Memory Mate's* cut and paste features), and has a unique and fun to use interface.

You can enter information randomly, using a box for each piece of information (in fact, the box is really a record, and all the records make up one or more files). The program is simplicity itself to operate, you merely hit the hot key and press N (for new) and type away. When you're finished, pressing Esc twice completes the record. You really don't have to remember anything about what you've written (no file names, no keywords, no structure). To find any information simply type in the text string to "Get" all the notes with that text string.

One feature which I find extremely useful is the cut-and-paste facility. You can trap anything on the screen, store it, edit it, and then introduce some or all of it into another application or somewhere else in the same application. It's an amazingly versatile utility and is one of the three TSRs which are part of my AUTOEXEC.BAT file (the other two are *Cruise Control* and *Flash*).

Tracker has many of the capabilities of *DayFlo*, another free-form text database system by the same company, but uses a more structured format for entering and retrieving information. The forms and reports superimpose organization on your data, but in all other respects, *Tracker* is text-oriented and allows you to place field labels anywhere you wish, and enter whatever information you wish under each label (up to 32K maximum). This semi-structured approach, while making it ideal for use as a business information tracking tool, limits its usefulness for searching and retrieving large amounts of free form text.

SquareNote, at under \$70.00, is the best choice for those on a limited budget. It has the features which I wish *Word's* new document manager had (perhaps in the next update?). At present, *SquareNote*, like *Word*, indexes only the keywords, and uses only one form of search, a full-text string search. Retrieval time using the keywords is very fast, while using the full-text search is relatively slow. Unlike *Word*, with *SquareNote* you can browse through records and can cut and paste sections of the selected notes that you want for a particular writing task, into an ASCII file, which you can then work on with your word processor.

One feature which I especially like about *SquareNote* is its ability to show you a list of keywords presently in use so you can co-ordinate your keyword list and keep it meaningful for text search and retrieval.

A new version of *SquareNote* has just been announced (Version 2.0) which corrects some of the deficiencies of the earlier version. Version 2 is faster (a RAM cache has been built in), has a new much improved text editor, and allows smoother import and export facilities.

None of the other four programs, however, approach *askSam's* capabilities in managing a large text database. It's power and sophistication allows it to do as much as any text management program, (within the limitations imposed by the text database file structure) and much more. *askSam* supports both fielded and full text data. Like the best of the text retrieval programs, it can conduct text string searches and retrievals amazingly fast even though it does not use indexing. Importing of files into its database is simple and easy, although the files must be in ASCII format. *askSam* also allows field-orientated searches (implied,

explicit, and contextual)—you can set up the fields before entering or importing data, or after. Manipulating text at the field level allows for more sophisticated searches, retrievals, and reporting. The program, however, is more than just a search-and-retrieval program: it also allows file modification, generation of data, and mathematical operations.

Version 4 of *askSam*, which has just been released, offers many improvements and new features, the most exciting being its new hypertext capabilities. The hypertext facility is a powerful new feature which essentially turns *askSam* into an interactive relational database system. With hypertext you can pursue information in a random manner, using any record as a link to any other record with common words or symbols.

askSam is both command and menu driven, making it suitable for both the novice and expert user. While giving you the full round of file management utilities (searching, logical operators, sorting, selection, and printing) the program is exceptionally easy to use.

You might wonder, then, why bother with the text retrieval systems if the text database programs are so superior? There are many reasons; but perhaps the most important are that text retrieval programs work more effectively with the many small and large files generated by other application programs (often within the native formats), and many of these programs offer features not found in the text database programs. Then, too, the text retrieval systems are often less expensive, generally less complicated to run, and easier to learn.

What you use depends on your needs. For many, an uncomplicated but easy to use program, such as the *Gofer* or the least expensive version of *ZyIndex*, might be more than enough—and having something more sophisticated and powerful would just be extra baggage. Others may need the capabilities and features offered by *WordCruncher* and *askSam*.

Which text management program should you use? It all depends on what you're going to use it for. If all you want is a program which will clear the paper clutter on your desk, then the best program (and also the least expensive) might be *Tornado Notes*. If all you need is an easy to use system to search and retrieve information from hundreds or thousands of small to large files which are relatively static, then *ZyIndex* might be perfect. However, if you want the ultimate in text search and retrieval software and if concordances (and all you can do with them) is important, then *WordCruncher* would be your best choice. And finally, if you need the sophistication and power of a text orientated database program, you couldn't do better than *askSam*.

What do I use? *Tornado Notes*, *Golden Retriever*, *Gofer*, *WordCruncher*, and *askSam*—each has its own special features that I couldn't do without. But your needs and wants are likely different from mine, as would be your choice in text retrieval programs.

Program Information

askSam	Seaside Software, 119 South Washington Street, Post Office Box 31, Perry, Florida, USA, 32347.
Dragnet	Access Softek, 3204 Adeline Street, Berkeley, CA, USA, 94703.
Electra Find	O'Neill Software, Post Office Box 26111, San Francisco, CA, USA, 94126.
Gofer	Microlytics Inc., 300 Main Street, Rochester, NY, USA, 14445.
Golden Retriever	S.K. Data Inc., 60 Wilmington Road, Post Office Box 413, Burlington, MA, USA, 01803.
Memory Lane	Group L Corporation, 481 Carlisle Dr., Herndon, VA, USA, 22070.

Memory Mate	Broderbund Software Inc., 17 Paul Drive, San Rafael, CA, USA, 94903.
SearchExpress	Executive Technologies Limited, 2120 Sixteenth Avenue, South Birmingham, AL, USA, 35205.
SquareNote	UnionSquare, Post Office Box 228, Somerville, MA, USA, 02143.
Tornado Notes	Micro Logic Corp., Post Office Box 174, 100 2nd Street, NJ, USA, 07602.
Tracker	DayFlo Software, 17701 Mitchell Avenue North, Irvine, CA, USA, 92714.
WordCruncher	Electronic Text Corporation, 5600 North University Avenue, Provo, Utah, USA, 84604.
Zoo Keeper	Polaris Software, 613 West Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA, USA, 92025.
ZyIndex	ZyLAB Corporation, 233 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois, USA, 60611.

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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).

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