



Let's get personal

Tim Phillips looks at the latest crop of notebooks, brings dispatches from the frontline at Dr Solomon's, and some more mighty macros.

I've taken a break from the nasty headaches of big, bruising word processors this month to enjoy the more understated charms of this year's new crop of PDAs. My predecessor in the Hands On WP hotseat got his biggest postbag ever when he investigated some of the functions of the Psion 3a's word processing. I've been looking at the Psion's competitors: the excellent new HP OmniGo 100, Sharp's ZR-5000, and the Trekkie's favourite, the Newton MessagePad. The first two look and feel like the Psion; the last, as you are probably aware, is quite different.

The OmniGo concentrates on financial applications, and it's an excellent scientific calculator, but that's not why we are here. It also has excellent pen input, something that the Psion lacks. HP uses Graffiti, a pen input system that relies on the user to write letters in a certain way. So the letter "A" is written as a '^', like a teepee. This speeds up handwriting recognition, is quick to learn and very accurate.

The main problem is a 63mm-square screen that taxes your pen input capability, and a lack of transfer functions.

Sharp's ZR-5000 is excellent if you want to write short memos. It has a screen the size

of the Psion 3a and decent handwriting recognition, but more importantly, it has the best little keyboard around. Pen input is best as a way of dragging text around to edit your notes. Recommended, but at £400 compared to £250 for the Psion and the HP, it's not cheap. There's also a capacity to exchange documents with a desktop.

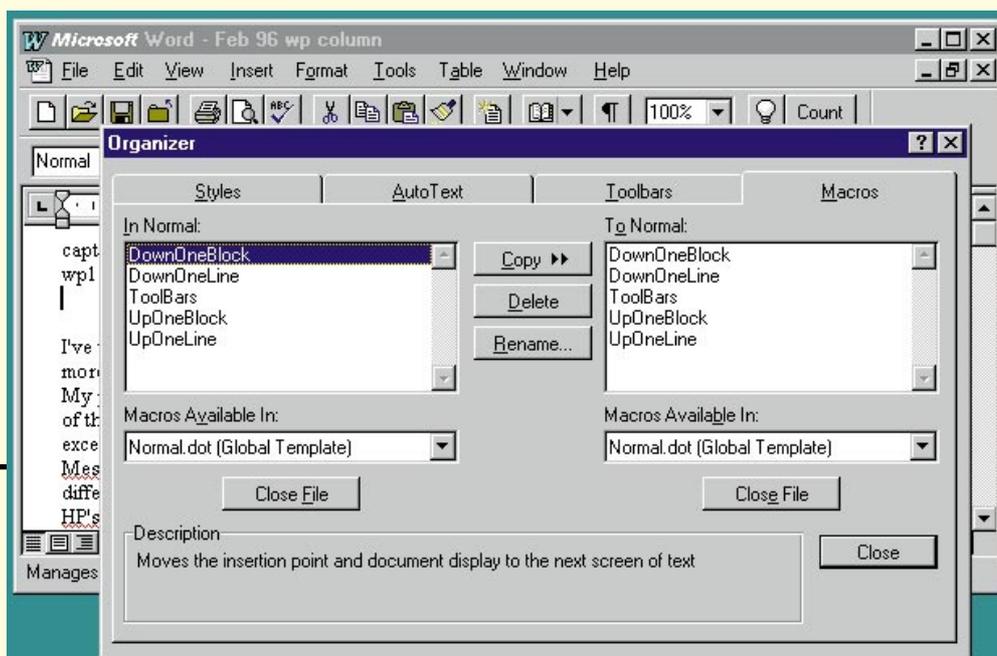
Finally the Newton, which has just been launched with version 2.0 of its operating system. At about £700, this is both too big and too expensive to be an organiser for casual use. It does have several interesting improvements for word processor fans though.

First, it has a keyboard option which plugs into the serial port so you can type, rather than just write with a stylus. Sec-

ond, it is now much easier to use a serial cable to swap information with your PC or Mac — a basic requirement which surprisingly has taken Apple two years to accept. Finally, the handwriting recognition is now excellent, although slow. It looks as if the days when you can write your document instead of typing it are still some way off. The Newton has some great features now, and you can also get Graffiti on a PC Card for it — but its note taker is still not a word processor.

Virus vengeance

Viruses are back in the news, with Dr Solomon's accusing its competitors of not being aware of the dangers of Word for Windows viruses. If you recall, we wrote about the Concept virus (Microsoft called it



If you are flummoxed by the "Colors" stealth virus, you can go looking for the rogue macros using File, Templates, Organizer to get this dialogue box

Finding the right words

Firstly, three problems on Ami Pro 3.1. You know how it is, you wait all month for one then three come along at once.

- James Ball from Swindon has two of them. He wants to know whether he can start up Ami Pro without the “untitled” document opening as well.

The answer is no — but you can record a macro which closes that document, and set the macro to autorun when you start Ami Pro. If the idea is to save time on Ami’s exhaustive startup routine, then this makes the problem worse, not better.

If the problem is just that you don’t want a spare document hanging around, then this isn’t so bad — as the untitled document vapourises as soon as you open an existing file.

His other question also involves opening documents. “How do I display more than one document format at once? I use text and Ami Pro documents and switching between them wastes hours.”

Again, there’s no straightforward solution, as Lotus informs me that the one-type open box is hard coded and unchangeable. Instead it recommends recording a macro to open a certain file format, and putting it on the icon bar. You could have one for text and one for Ami Pro — which also short-circuits the tedium when Ami Pro resets its target directory each time you change the file format you look for.

- Our virgin WordPro question from Eric LaPlace of Liverpool, who asks whether he will need to do bulk conversion of files when he switches to WordPro from Ami Pro.

The answer is yes if you want WordPro format, but no if you are happy to leave the files as Ami Pro files, which Word Pro will open transparently. If you do want to convert, WordPro has an Import function on its file menu which allows you to select multiple files, and saves the converted file in the same location alongside the old version.

- A man called Jeff mailed me from South Africa, where I hear Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Springbok captain Francois Pienaar are both confirmed readers of the column and macro club contributors, to ask why you have to wait until your Word 6 document was finished to add numbered or bulleted indents.

The lucky answer is that you don’t. If you’re a user, try it now. Type a list, but before each item type an asterisk followed by a space. After the first item, the list reformats and you have automatically indented bullet points. Now do the same thing, but type a dash (minus sign) at the beginning of each line instead. You get a different sort of bullet. Now do this using the numbers 1, 2, 3. Again the formatting changes to make a

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a “Prank Macro”) a couple of months ago, and as predicted, a few copycat viruses have made their way into circulation.

The virus anoraks at Dr Solomon’s have been telling me about the two most significant, Nuclear and Colors.

Nuclear adds the message: “And finally I would like to say: STOP ALL FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING IN THE PACIFIC!” to the end of your document when you print it, if the system clock is between 55 and 59 seconds. This thoroughly admirable sentiment is one of several payloads in the macro; the other two, which were meant to produce a normal virus and also to delete system files on 5 April, are thankfully bugged and don’t work.

You’ll find Nuclear by looking under Tools, Macro and checking to see if nine extra macros have been added to normal.dot. One is called “Payload”.

Colors is more significant. Although its payload simply changes the Windows colour settings regularly, it is a stealth virus: look for its macros under Tools,

Macro and the macros hide themselves. Instead, look under File, Templates, Organizer, Macros to see if illicit macros have been added.

There are several more new viruses detected like this; I recommend you buy an anti-virus product that will spot them. Currently Dr Solomon’s will, and McAfee and Norton don’t. This may have changed by the time you read this column.

What’s certain is that document viruses are getting more sophisticated. More people share documents than the executable files that traditionally carry viruses, so take precautions if you’re on the Internet or a large network.

Yet more exciting news for WP users — Novell is selling WordPerfect. This means problems for WordPerfect users: no matter who buys it, there will certainly be a delay in the next release, if indeed the commitment is there to continue development. If WordPerfect were not a major headache for Novell, with development costs outstripping revenues in the midst



Finding the right words (continued)

numbered list as you type, and if you change the order of the items, the numbering changes to fit.

The tricky bit is ending the list — type enter, followed by back-space to go back to normal paragraph formatting.

● Gary Martin writes from Reading. He's another WordStar user who wants a bit more flexibility. The answer to these WordStar for DOS problems is usually buried in WSCHANGE — which is the utility for controlling default settings — but it's such an involved process to find the right information, I don't blame him for giving up. I can help him because I found someone else with a similar problem who had contacted WordStar tech support online.

Like a lot of the *Hands On* readers who mail me, Gary writes a lot of academic papers and needs to enter simple formulas. The trouble is that Wordstar will wrap his formulas when he enters the hyphen at the end of a line, so a simple line like 3-2=1 might get broken after the minus sign.

There are three solutions to the problem. Either enter a hard return immediately before the formula so it begins a line, which may look funny if the document is justified or if you subsequently reformat. The second is to turn off the word wrap, using the commands ".aw off" before the line and ".aw on" immediately after the line. This doesn't solve the justification problem. The final option is to make the hyphen one of the characters which don't induce a word wrap. In WSCHANGE, find the section which controls word wrapping, and enter the hyphen as a new character to avoid. This

will mean that you can't automatically wrap a word where you want it, but it does have the advantage that your justified text will stay justified.

● Finally, to show all you Mac users that we care, WordPerfect for Macintosh 3.0 (not my favourite program) has given Janet Erid, of Norwich, a problem. She is trying to convert her documents to PC format, and the smart quotes refuse to translate into quotes — either smart or stupid — in a WordPerfect 6.0 equivalent. Instead, she gets blobs. However, when she opens the document in WP 5.1, the quotes are still there.

Luckily, this one was known to Novell. In WordPerfect 6.0, the smart quotes are not recognised and converted to TrueType characters unless you install the Typographic fonts which include smart quotes. Install that font and the problem is solved.

Smart quotes are a constant source of trouble for users, which is a shame as they do look professional in a document. Mac users started the trend, and you can follow their email across the internet, as it's littered with funny characters instead of quotation marks. My general advice is that if you are going to be making documents for either Internet consumption or printing, then leave them turned on. If you are going to convert a document, or are going to use the word processor to type email, or if you are printing on anything except a laser printer, turn them off or check very carefully that they will convert sensibly. I keep my smart quotes turned off, and nobody has complained — yet.

of Microsoft's onslaught, it wouldn't be up for sale. As my postbag has become almost 100 percent Microsoft-based, I can believe WordPerfect's buyer will have lots of ground to make up, at least among PCW readers.

Win'95 freebie

Now for some good news if you are one of the dwindling band of Windows 95 users who haven't invested in Microsoft Office yet. The Word for Windows viewer is now available for Windows 95.

Hold on to your hats there, because it really is jolly useful. It automatically configures itself as a

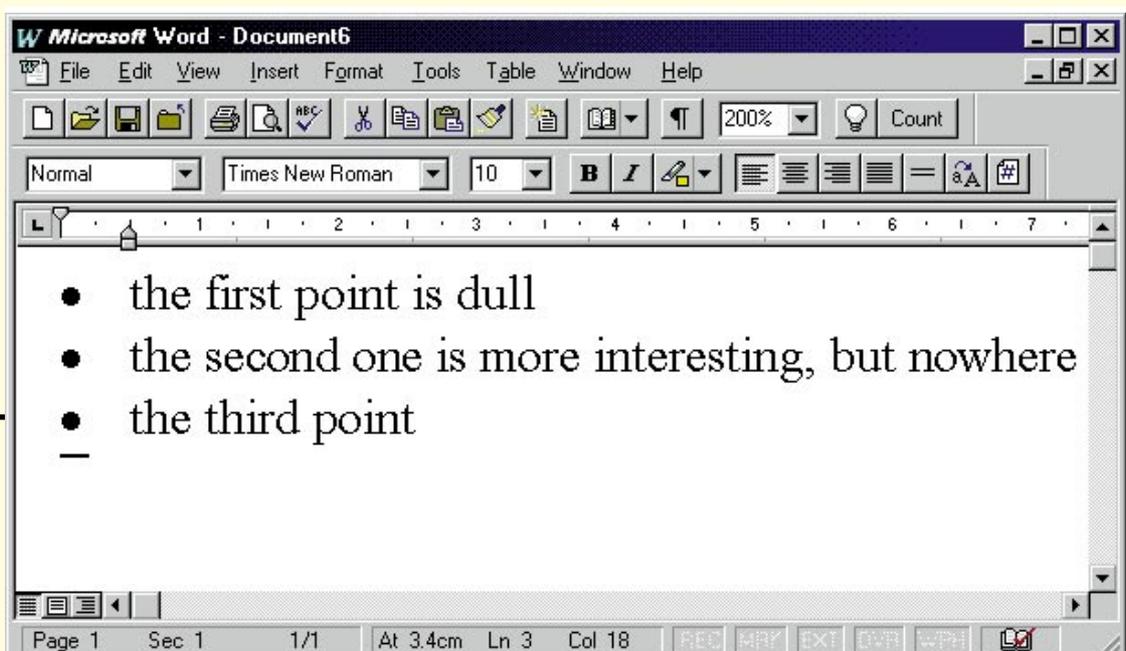
helper app for Web browsers — even Netscape, which shows a commendable sense of fairness for Microsoft. It will view files — although it will not allow you to edit them — created in Word version 1.0 and later, or 4.0 and later if it's Word for the Mac. You get all the page layout, including headers and footers, and you can print too.

This might seem underwhelming, but there are two important applications. The

first is for business users on a network, where some workstations need access to documentation but don't need a full Word Processor. The second is for Internet browsing. Using the Word Viewer, you can enclose hyperlinks in a document, and a browser like Netscape can follow them.

You get your free copy of the viewer either by visiting "Free stuff" at www.microsoft.com, or from the MSWORD forum on the Microsoft Net-

Enter a list of bullet points in Word using the asterisk, and it automatically reformats them in a list



work, or by ordering it from Microsoft on 0345 0020000, where you get charged postage.

Tim's macro club

My macro club members have been keeping their heads down recently with Christmas shopping and so on, but I am indebted to a couple of postal correspondents for the following:

Andrew Rowland of Barnsley adds to our body of knowledge on transposing characters. He points out — rightly — that the macros we have used so far all clear the clipboard, which can be irritating if you want to cut and paste large amounts of text. He suggests an alternative form, "Which just goes to show that the best answer is not always the one a recorded macro may suggest, and a foray into macro programming can be well worth the edit."

```
Sub MAIN
CharLeft 1
a$ = Selection$()
EditClear
CharRight 1
Insert a$
End Sub
```

Anyone got any other macros

which are an improvement on anything you could get by recording keystrokes? Prizes for the best.

Roger Musson of Kirkham has an excellent macro for label printing in Word. I happen to know from experience that this is a continuing source of disappointment and frustration for users, and I'm glad I don't have to do it very often.

Use the Tools/Envelopes and labels menu option to define then insert a page of blank labels. The document now contains an empty table with the number of rows and columns, height and width appropriate to the sheet of labels being used. Go to the first cell in the table and design one label...when the design is complete use the following macro to replicate the contents through the table.'

A simple idea that works very well. It means that you can also add images, artwork or fancy fonts using WordArt to your label, and the macro handles them as well.

```
Sub MAIN
EditGoTo .Destination = "\Cell"
CharLeft 1,1
EditCopy
While NextCell() <> 0
EditPaste
Wend
End Sub
```

An easy macro but very useful. Two points to make: first, make sure you set up

your page of labels properly. Word offers all the standard size and make sure you pick the right one — a couple of millimetres error in setting your label size will be disastrous by the bottom of the page. Second, make sure your printer can handle label printing. As Mr Musson points out, if you can print on card, this is a cheap way to make your own business cards.

Another neat trick for Word users, this time from Peter McGarvey at dial.pipex.com. "I find that the two toolbars at the top, plus my toolbar at the bottom can sometimes make the document window a tad small: this helps.

It's a simple macro to toggle the formatting toolbar (the bottom one). Make it into a button on the top toolbar, and it will turn the formatting bar on and off. If you replace the word "Formatting" with any of the other toolbar names that you find in

```
Sub MAIN
If ToolbarState("Formatting") = 0 Then
ViewToolbars .Toolbar = "Formatting", .Show
Else
ViewToolbars .Toolbar = "Formatting", .Hide
End If
End Sub
```

View, Toolbars, then it will toggle that particular toolbar too." (See above.)

Apologies: please, oh please stop emailing me to say that there's an easier way to skip from cell to cell in a table than the macro provided by Lee Curtis of Idle. As I should have noticed at the time, you use Ctrl-Tab for that. It's what Ctrl-Tab is designed for. There's no excuse. I am most terribly sorry. Now leave my mailbox alone.

Finally, yet another challenge to tax the brightest minds of our generation from Phil Stanton, who asks: "Is there a way of incorporating some kind of counter in a Word 6 macro? I use Word to produce my invoices, and currently I have to look at the most recent invoice to find out what the next invoice number should be. I would like to have some kind of permanently stored counter, so that when I open a new document based on my invoice template, and the AutoNew macro runs (which currently just inserts the date), it puts in the correct invoice number."

Prizes for elegant solutions, as ever.

PCW Contacts

And that's that for this month. Surface or airmail to PCW, otherwise I'm on email at wong@cix.compulink.co.uk and CompuServe 100436,3616