

InfoWorld Software Review

WP6502 word-processing system for OSI computer

By Jim McClure

The WP6502 word processor from Dwo Quong Fok Lok Sow for Ohio Scientific computers is an easy-to-use text system for home or office. Although word processors tend to be somewhat homogenous, WP6502 has several unique features—including interactive command modes and a step-by-step training system—that may make it a good choice for those who possess less familiarity with com-

align the right-hand margin. This is an unusual feature in word processors, and it produces a newspaper-like appearance. Justification is also possible on printers with no special spacing capabilities, such as teletype printers. In this case, WP6502 adds spaces between words to align the right-hand margin.

Boldface printing, underlining and pitch changes are possible on printers with these capabilities. A command is

also available to send control characters directly to the printer. This feature is useful for sending on/off codes to printers with automatic motor control.

Besides simple commands for entering and editing text, WP6502 provides some special commands. For instance, you can create sections of text that a two-digit code can reference. These sections are called "text blocks," and they are useful in com-

posing form letters or other documents in which the same sentences are repeated often.

For example, an opening and a closing to a letter can be stored in a text block and you can call them into the main text as many times as you want by specifying the text-block number. You can define up to 100 different text blocks in memory at a time. By keeping files of text blocks on disk, you can

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InfoWorld

Software Report Card

WP650

Word Processor

Version 1.3

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ease of Use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Error Handling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

System Requirements

- Ohio Scientific Computer
- OS-65D or OS-65U operating system
- 48K RAM
- 5¼-inch disk drive, 8-inch preferable
- Video terminal
- High-quality printer recommended

Price: \$250

Dwo Quong Fok Lok Sow

23 East 20th Street
New York, NY 10003

puters and text processing.

Features

Basically, the WP6502 program is a combination of text editor and text processor. Editing commands make it easy to enter and correct text, while special commands embedded in the text let you justify paragraphs and center and paginate text.

The manuals that come with WP6502 were printed with the word processor and are a good example of what it is capable of doing. The commands for inserting, deleting and moving text operate very much like such commands in other word processors. Its special features set WP6502 apart from the others, however. The features fall into two general categories: advanced print capabilities and special commands.

WP6502 supports a range of printer features. For printers with special spacing capabilities such as proportional spacing (when the width of individual characters varies), WP6502 will stretch out both the spaces between words and the letters themselves to

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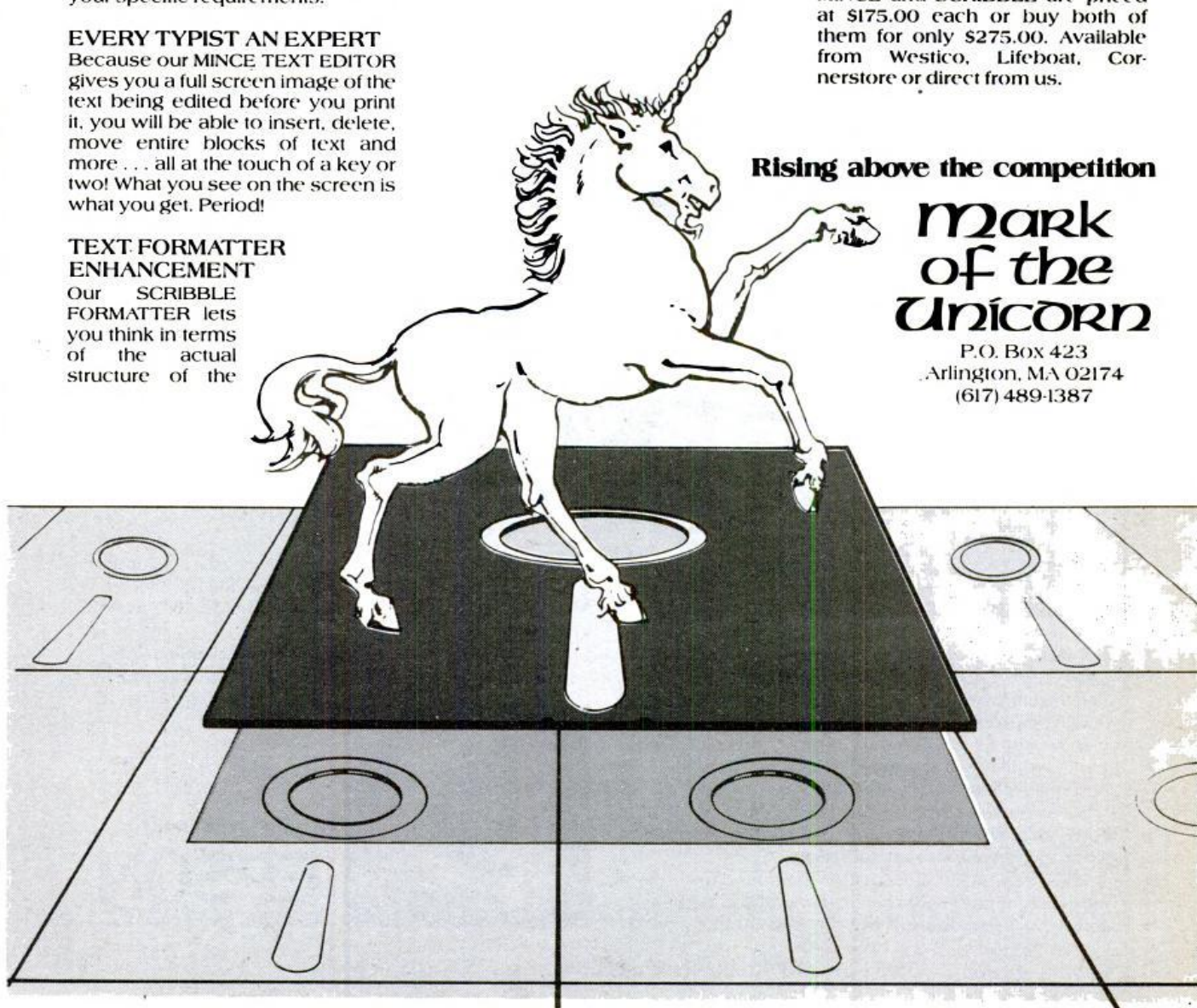
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continued from preceding page avoid repetitious typing.

Another feature of WP6502 allows you to insert data from the console into the text at print time. Consider the example of a form letter. By inserting an input command where the destination address would appear, you can specify different addresses for each copy of the letter with no reediting. Once again, this can save time by limiting repetitious work.

WP6502 has a global replace command. This command lets you have occurrences of a particular string of characters changed to another string. The program starts at the top of the

text area and prints every occurrence of the specified string, allowing you to make the change or skip to the next occurrence of the string. You have the option of escaping from the command at any time. This command is particularly useful for changing consistently misspelled words.

Besides commands for manipulating text, WP6502 offers the unusual ability to send text to other computers and receive it from them. Thus, you can phone other WP6502 users and exchange text files by using the Send and Receive commands listed on the main menu. The manual also says that communication is possible with other

types of programs and computers. This is certainly a novel feature for a word processor and may make it useful in situations in which several computers serve as individual work stations.

Performance

Since WP6502 is largely interactive, it is well suited for nontechnical people. Menus appear in all modes except line-edit. In most cases, you can use the escape key to abort a command and return to the main menu. In the line-edit mode (potentially the most confusing), the program prints the line you're editing with the cursor posi-

tioned at the next character that needs alteration. Thus, you don't have to imagine where the next change will take place.

Although WP6502 is effective for generating memos, letters and other small documents, it is difficult to create larger documents because you can edit only files that fit entirely into memory. Although you can print separate files together by using the WP6502 DQ-CHAIN program (available separately), the package would be more convenient if you could edit larger-than-memory files directly. Currently, the largest file that can be edited on a 48K OS-650 system is about nine or ten 400-word pages.

As far as I can tell, you cannot use WP6502 to produce or edit source programs (i.e., for the assembler), since WP6502 inserts special-format characters into its text files.

Ease of use

I found WP6502 generally easy to use, but reading the manuals is a must.

When purchasing the WP6502 package, you specify which OSI computer model you're using. The diskette arrives ready to run on the system, so you don't have to go through a complicated installation procedure.

Dvo Quong Fok Lok Sow claims that WP6502 is compatible with a wide variety of printers operating through both serial and parallel interfaces. When you first load the program, it asks whether you're using a teletype-like printer or a variable-spacing printer. You can select an install utility to change default parameters such as lines per page, lines per inch, terminal width and height.

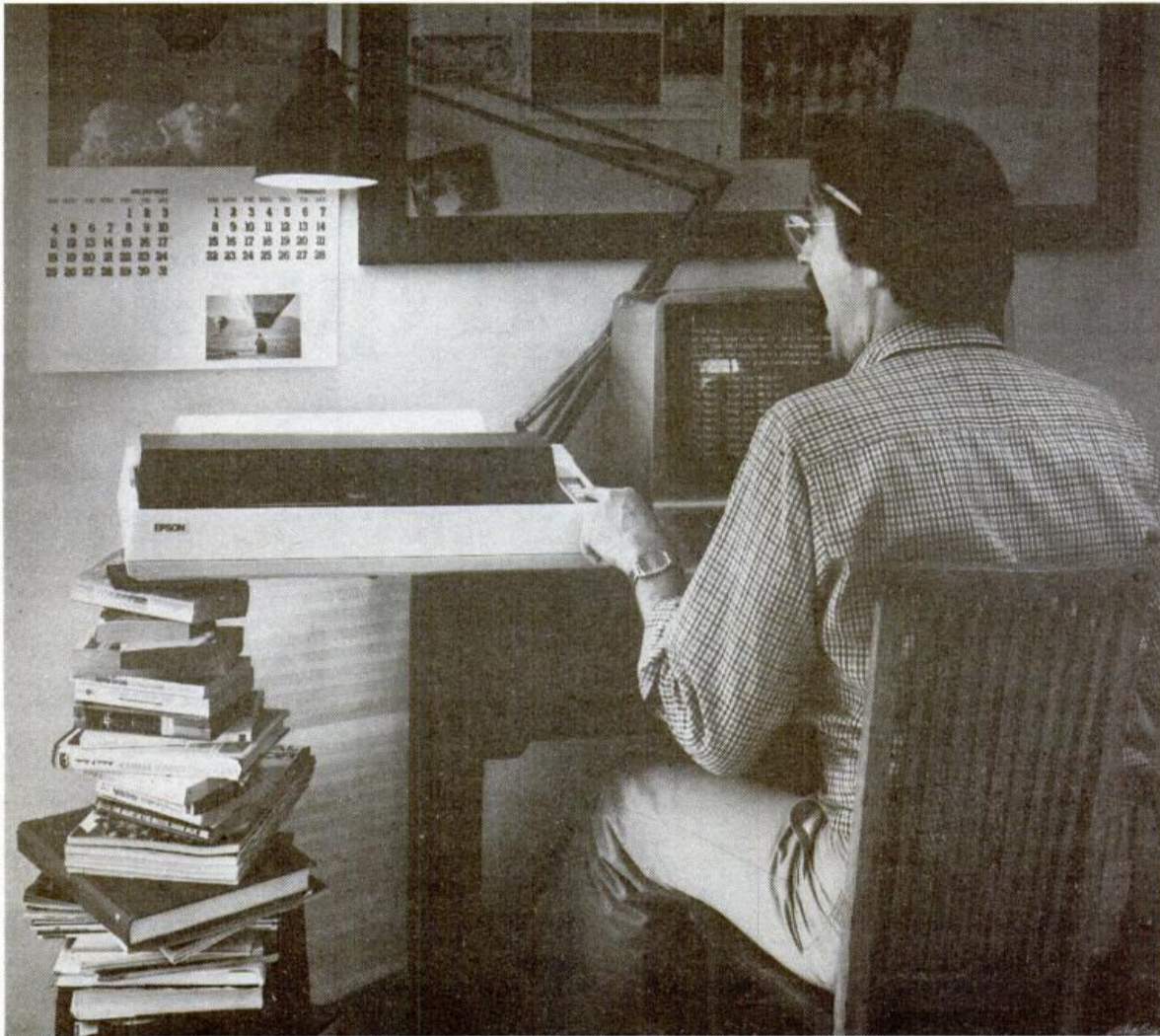
Operation of WP6502 is easy since it is mostly interactive. To select a particular command from a menu, you type a single character, which can be either uppercase or lowercase. Usually, the character is related to the operation. To issue an insert command for instance, you type *I*.

Since entering answers to the many prompts the system generates can become tedious for advanced users, WP6502 lets you enter a space in response to many questions. This action will select the default answer, if there is one. Another time-saving feature is that you almost never have to press the return key to answer a prompt.

One especially convenient feature of WP6502 is that when text is being inserted, the program automatically starts a new line after the current one is filled. This means you can touch-type from a memo or other document without having to pay attention to the video screen. The insert mode will keep up with the fastest typists, which again makes it convenient for touch-typists.

To me, the most inconvenient aspect of WP6502 concerns its insert command. On almost all video or line-oriented editors, inserted text is placed before the cursor or character pointer. In WP6502, however, the insert command causes text to appear after the cursor. This makes it impossible to conveniently insert text at the beginning of a document. Although new users may have little difficulty

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assembly, interactive assembly, up to 31 characters per label, string search and/or replace, plus numerous other editing facilities. A word processor is included. Price is \$169.95. Eastern House Software, 3239 Linda Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27106.

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CP/M

Intercom communications software is available for Zenith, Radio Shack Model II, Cromemco, Ohio Scientific and Apple II computers with CP/M. Intercom is designed for interactive communications and verified-quantity file transfers using *continued on following page*

continued from preceding page adapting to this scheme, it is really cumbersome for those of us accustomed to other word processors.

Another minor inconvenience is the lack of an explicit Find command. Although you can find text strings by using the Replace command and replacing the search string with itself, this is troublesome.

Error handling

Error reporting in WP6502 is limited but adequate, considering that there are very few mistakes you can make. If the word processor detects an ambiguous or unrecognizable command embedded in the text, it rings the terminal bell and prints ERR>? at the point in the text where the error was found. When that happens, you can either escape and return to the main menu or enter the line-edit mode, which displays the faulty line and lets you correct the mistake.

The ERR>? message may also appear if you enter an incorrect response to a prompt. In this case, you can either reenter the requested information or press the escape key and return to the main menu.

Documentation

Two manuals come with WP6502, a user's guide and a training manual. Both texts are easy to read and generally well organized. Neither manual has an index, but since they are not especially long, it's not really necessary. The back covers of both books have a command summary, which is extremely useful.

The user's guide is aimed at people who are familiar with word processors. It includes a brief but comprehensive discussion of the edit and command modes of WP6502 as well as information on print modes and types of printers.

The training manual is designed to teach someone with no background in computers or word processing how to use WP6502. It begins by explaining what word processing is and guides you through a few simple commands.

You can practice the examples in the training manual on several text files supplied on the system diskette. In this way you learn how to accomplish basic text editing such as spelling correction, insertion and deletion of words and phrases. At the novice level your actions are completely

guided; the program tells you exactly what keys to press to perform basic tasks. Before you graduate from novice to expert level, you will have been shown how to scan backwards and forwards in the text file, how to insert and delete characters and words, how to view and print the text and how to handle disk files.

Then, when you're at the expert level, the package introduces you to embedded commands that perform special formatting functions such as justification and centering. At the superstar level you're ready to master text blocks, print-time data input and other advanced features.

Summary

The WP6502 word-processing pack-

age works best with an advanced printer, preferably one with proportional spacing. This combination will allow the creation of professional-looking documents with reasonable convenience and efficiency. Although it does not have all of the advanced features of some of the popular CP/M editors, it is less expensive. Furthermore, in combination with other programs available through the company such as DQ-Mail, WP6502 can handle more complex tasks.

Its interactive operation and step-by-step training system definitely make it attractive to nontechnical people.

In short, WP6502 can turn an ordinary Ohio Scientific computer into a powerful word-processing system. ■

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