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WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE MARKET BACKGROUND

As the demand for microcomputer word processing software has grown, the expectations and job descriptions of its users have changed significantly.

In corporations, where word processors typically were used by clerical staff for production typing applications, they now are employed by a wider range of users who demand ease of learning and a full set of features, flexibility, speed, and the ability to network. Ashton-Tate research indicates that almost half of today's word processing software users are managers and professionals.

Furthermore, because corporate word processing increasingly is performed on microcomputers, rather than dedicated terminals, compatibility with other applications software -- database managers, spreadsheets, other word processors -- also has become important. Compatibility between software is now a key issue.

Individual users, or people in smaller organizations or work groups, demand many of the same features that corporate users

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require. Because they use word processors for a wide variety of tasks -- from simple letter-writing to the production of complete, spell-checked, multiple-font documents with columns, footnotes and an index -- they require a sophisticated feature set, flexibility of operation, and easy access to the product's power.

The word processing software market grew by 13 percent during 1986; by 1991, business and government investment in microcomputer word processing will reach \$584 million, according to Future Computing, the Dallas-based market research firm.

Ashton-Tate's MultiMate line of word processing products continually has grown at a faster rate than the market. In 1986, MultiMate's growth continued, with both revenue and unit sales increasing more than 50 percent over 1985.

MultiMate has been a corporate standard since its first product was introduced in 1982; it has maintained that position through a series of enhancements and upgrades, and by listening to its users. According to Forrester Research, 37 percent of Fortune 1000 corporations are standardized on MultiMate. No other word processing product has a higher concentration. MultiMate Advantage II is designed for contemporary word processing users in organizations of all sizes, as well as corporations.

CURRENT USER DEMANDS

"MultiMate Advantage II has been designed specifically to

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meet the demands of the new generation of word processing user," said Lydia Dobyns, Ashton-Tate's vice president, marketing. "Word processing software products are approaching feature parity and many people who buy word processors today do so by looking beyond feature checklists.

"There is no single way in which people who use word processors do their jobs. In developing MultiMate Advantage II, we spent a good deal of time examining the different ways in which today's word processing software users work," Dobyns said. "It was a qualitative study as well as a quantitative feature-driven 'wish list' poll, and we believe it has made MultiMate Advantage II a better product for all users.

"As a corporate standard, MultiMate products always have evolved from the coherent, strategic input of people who know how the product will be used," she said. "MultiMate Advantage II has been designed to be both a significant and logical successor for the 500,000 users of MultiMate Advantage and the MultiMate 3.3 Series, and a strong entry in the marketplace for new users."

According to Dobyns, MultiMate Advantage II was designed to meet the following demands:

Quicker Results With Less Overhead. Users want to become productive quickly. Because many work with other applications software products, they are accustomed to certain interfaces and want the option of selecting the interface most familiar to them.

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MultiMate Advantage II responded with an optional, pull-down menu interface consistent with those found in Ashton-Tate's dBASE III PLUS, Framework II and RapidFile. Experienced users may switch off the menus as a short-cut. Hot Start/Hot Print options also permit a bypass of the menu system to create and print documents quickly. Users now can make menu selections through only one keystroke, and can store keystroke sequences as macros to simplify operation. An expansive undo/delete feature allows users to restore deleted text continually (limited only by disk space).

Options. Users want software that works the way they do. This requires the flexibility to adapt to the task at hand; and to work with other software packages, printers and other peripherals.

MultiMate Advantage II gives users the option of document or page orientation; the option of a pull-down menu interface consistent with those found in Ashton-Tate's dBASE III PLUS, Framework II and RapidFile; six-function mathematical capability, and sorting within a document. Because MultiMate Advantage II can import data files from dBASE III PLUS via its new dBASE merge feature, users may utilize data from the industry-standard database management system to generate mail lists and form letters.

The integration of the MultiMate On-File mail list manager greatly enhances MultiMate Advantage II's mailmerge capability.

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MultiMate Advantage II users also can exchange their files more easily with FFT-DCA files and WordStar files.

MultiMate Advantage II supports more than 400 computer printers and provides increased laser support, including 26 fonts within a document and up to 18 soft (down-loadable) fonts. Down-loading has been improved so that users only have to down-load once.

Speed. Today's word processing users demand speedy execution of commands. MultiMate Advantage II has enhanced its performance in four significant areas: search and replace; spell checking; selecting a page for printing; and conversion of ASCII files from disk to screen.

Networking. Departmental-level computing requires that word processors be connected on local area networks for document preparation and editing, and peripheral sharing. Ashton-Tate will release a local area network version of MultiMate Advantage II during 1987 to satisfy this requirement.

TWO-TIERED DEVELOPMENT

Dobyns said the release of MultiMate Advantage II is part of Ashton-Tate's ongoing two-tiered development strategy -- to continue to release significant improvements to products that run on the current 8086/8088 hardware, while building revolutionary new products for future operating systems and the 286/386 generation of microcomputers.

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The company's strategy in developing future word processing products embraces several key areas: seamless links between the word processor and other applications; integrated desktop publishing features; built-in artificial intelligence; enhanced multi-user capability; and full upward compatibility. Future products also may support scanning devices and voice input and annotation.

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