Good features + Good price = Success.

Model II Scripsit

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Tandy/Radio Shack
Fort Worth, TX
$300

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Scripsit for the Model II is Tandy's high-level entry into the word processing arena for its top-of-the-line microcomputer system. Scripsit's features compare favorably with other state-of-the-art, sophisticated, screen-oriented machine language wordmashers like Electric Pencil, WordStar and Magic Wand.

Word processing comprises two basic functions: editing and formatting. Use the edit functions to create and revise text. The formatting functions make the printout look like you want.

I need flexible formatting features, but my primary emphasis as a professional writer is text editing. The commands should be simple and require a minimum of keystrokes. An integrated system from one manufacturer mates the software specifically with the hardware. It is thus with Scripsit and the Model II.

Moving the Cursor

The arrow keys scroll and position the cursor. Some other programs require the control key and four different character keys. You can move the cursor one character at a time in any of the four directions indicated by the arrows. Pressing the Repeat key and an arrow simultaneously moves the cursor continuously. Pressing the Hold key and an arrow transports the cursor to the left or right margins or to the top or bottom of the page. Press Hold and then U or D with a number to move the cursor a specific number of lines. Press Hold and then L with a number to move the cursor to a specific line.

Basic Editing

The two special function keys F1 and F2 serve as your single-stroke edit keys. F1 opens the text at any place you position the cursor to allow insertions. F2 deletes text.

Scripsit uses Model II's reverse video feature to highlight selected text portions for bulk deleting, moving and duplicating. You do not have to use special text boundary markers. For example, to move a paragraph of text from one place to another within a document, press Control and D together (to set the define function); press P (for paragraph) to highlight the text in reverse video; and press M (for move). Position the cursor where you want the text and press Control and R together. Presto!

The Define command, used to highlight text for manipulation, has several variations. Press W to define a word, S to define a sentence, P to define a paragraph, A to define all text above the cursor, and B to define all text below the cursor.

Basic Formatting

A special format line showing the format settings appears as a line of dashes along the bottom of the video display. Set the left and right margins on this line with { and }. Typing O sets the standard outline tab to indent the first line of each paragraph.

A status line directly below the format line indicates the margin settings. It also shows the document name; current page number; cursor position on the page (which changes as you move the cursor); the left edge of the screen window area (if you scroll the text horizontally); line spacing; mode (the regular mode is called "outline"); and locked block (shown by an asterisk). Locked block protects text blocks you do not want split over two pages.

Printing

You can print text at any time while you are working in a document. You can print a document from beginning to end continuously, or pause after each page to allow insertion of another sheet of paper. Other options are: paper size in lines (1-99 with 66 as default); maximum number of text lines per page (default is 50); justification by character, word or space insertion; pitch (10 for pica or 12 for elite); number of copies of document needed (from 1 to 254); request printing of line numbers; parallel or serial-driven printer (default is parallel for all Radio Shack printers); and line feed after each carriage return (not for Radio Shack printers).

Scripsit commands use all the Daisy Wheel Printer II's features. There is bold printing; underlining; bold and underlining together; double underlining; overstrike (to create accented or other special characters e.g. $\mathcal{L}^{\mu}f$); superscripts and subscripts (characters printed a half line above or below the text line); printing of vertical lines; and headers and footers in multiple variations. There is a procedure for printing multi-column text, especially useful for newsletters.

The Key Box

Model II
64K RAM
TRSDOS
1 or more disk drives
Daisy Wheel Printer II or other Radio Shack printer
Direct Memory Access

"There is a trade-off with a page-at-a-time system like Scripsit. . ."

General Comparisons

Scripsit uses only a portion of available RAM (about 8K) for text storage. RAM-oriented programs like Electric Pencil, Magic Wand, WordStar, and Auto Scribe use all available RAM (between 31K and 50K depending on the program—and assuming 64K of RAM) for text storage. With Scripsit, you cannot fill computer memory. Each time you begin on a new page, Scripsit saves the former page to disk. WordStar and Auto Scribe also have automatic save-to-disk transfers when RAM is filled. With Scripsit your document length is not limited by the amount of RAM you have. With RAM-oriented systems like Electric Pencil and Magic Wand, you must break a document into portions if it is too long for available RAM. There is a trade-off with a page-at-a-time system like Scripsit, however. Documents longer than one page produce the delays inherent in disk access. Scripsit is fairly fast in its disk procedures, but transferring a page between disk and RAM requires a few seconds. The other programs do not require disk access with documents that fit into RAM. Making changes within them is as fast as doing this within a single page in Scripsit. Scripsit, like WordStar and Auto Scribe, formats the pages on the video display exactly as they will be printed.

Scripsit is a completely integrated program, as are WordStar, Electric Pencil, and Auto Scribe. This means the editor and formatter are in the same program; you can print a portion in a specified format while you are editing (WordStar requires that text be saved to disk before printing, however). In Magic Wand, on the other hand, the editor and formatter are separate programs. With this arrangement, when you finish editing the text, you must run the formatter program. In separate programs the formatter does not take up any RAM during editing, leaving the largest possible memory space for text.

Scripsit in Detail

Once you become familiar with Scripsit, it will be easy to use. When you first sit down with this program, you could be a mite overwhelmed, especially if this is your first exposure to word processing. Because it is a rather complex package, Tandy includes an eight lesson audio cassette training course. Additionally there's an onscreen Help menu to call up when you get bogged down.

You start each Scripsit session with the directory, which lists the current date, the amount of disk storage space in use (expressed as a percent) and the number of documents on it, plus the base information for each document shown in Fig. 1.

Press the F1 key to create a new document. A prompt asks for a password; press Enter to bypass. The Create New Document menu appears, in which you name the document, set the format line, give the author or operator's name, type comments or a description, set the number of lines per page, set the activity level (H, M, L or N), and set the format (V or H). You can choose a default setting by pressing Enter. Press Enter at the end of the menu and a blank page appears with the cursor at the top left corner ready for text. Scripsit allows up to 84 lines on a page. If you try to input more than that, an error message appears: "There are too many lines of text on this page." Press Break and get a new page by pressing Control and N together. Continue inputting text when a new page appears. You can scroll by page in the document with Control and N (next) to go forward or Control and P (previous) to go backward. You can also go directly to a page by pressing Control and G (get), the page number, and Enter.

To open an existing document, position the cursor next to the document name and press O. The open document menu appears with the base information you typed in when you first created the document. If you do not want to change any information, press the Escape key to bypass the menu prompts and display the first page of the document. Add new pages between existing pages by typing a decimal page number after pressing Control and G. For example, to insert a page between pages 7 and 8, type the number 7.1 (up to 9 decimal pages can be inserted this way). There is a procedure to renumber pages and start over if you need to insert more than 9 new pages.

The repagination utility reorganizes a document with a uniform number of lines per page. You will be using it a *lot*. Be sure to repaginate a revised document *before* printing it. Otherwise there may not be a uniform number of lines per page or the last line of a page may not be complete. This procedure lets you reformat the document and hyphenate if desired.

Scripsit provides almost unlimited formatting variations within a document. You can reset the format line with new margins and change line spacing at any time for the complete document or any portion of it. You can set three kinds of tabs for columnar work: regular tabs, align tabs (for typing columns of numbers easily), and combination tabs. You can even save and recall up to eleven frequently used margin and tab settings.

Around the Keyboard

There are five special keys (besides F1 and F2) you will use often with Scripsit: Use Enter to end a paragraph, or move the cursor back to text area from a format line or status line. Use Control together with another key to give an instruction. You can use this key to bypass the prompt lists. Escape begins a utility, such as printing, copying, repagination; bypasses a document menu; goes to screen prompts on status line; and goes to disk directory. Break cancels an instruction and clears an error message. Press Hold before an arrow key to move the cursor quickly; Hold also cancels entries within a document menu and returns to default settings.

You can program five user-defined keys (J, K, Q, Y and Z) to hold up to 32 characters of repetitive information (such as a company or project name) or frequently used instructions (print instructions for underlining, bold printing, superscripts and subscripts). To call a user-defined instruction sequence, press Control and the particular key.

Other Features

The un-edit command cancels any edit changes and redisplays the page as it was last recorded.

Error messages appear and flash on the status line when you enter an instruction incorrectly. Press Break to cancel.

The merge utility constructs form letters by combining a base document with a merge (variable) file. This requires a two-drive system. You can, however, with a one-drive

Document name
Format (vertical for standard-sized paper; horizontal for some legal forms)
Date created
Date revised
Author/Operator initials (optional)
Number of pages
Size (percent of disk used)
Efficiency (machine speed/performance in percent form)
Activity level (projected amount of revision—H for high, M for moderate, L for low, N for none)
Comments/description
Selection prompts (one keystroke commands to Open a document; Copy a document; Create a document; Delete a document; Next screen to see next page of directory; Disk to see the directory for disk in drives 1, 2, or 3; Disk Utilities to format, backup, swap disks or end a session, list directory to printer, change disk defaults, enable printing from disk, disable printing from disk, print from disk).

Fig. 1. Directory information for each document.

"If you have a one-drive system, be prepared for some hair-pulling."

system, use a simple form of this utility for printing addresses on envelopes or labels.

The video mode (press Control with V) shows paragraph ends, soft returns and tab settings. It's a good practice to be in this mode when you insert and delete text, so you can see exactly what is happening. To center a line, press Control with L.

The global find/delete/replace utility finds a word, phrase or unique string of characters throughout a document and replaces or deletes it. You can choose to ignore upper/lowercase; you can stop at each occurrence or repeat continuously. You can begin the search at the beginning of the document, on any page, or from the cursor position.

Drawbacks

Scripsit's page-at-a-time orientation can be frustrating. As such, Scripsit works within the relatively small RAM space of 8K (8064 characters, about 1150 words). It does this quite well for same-disk operations.

Suppose you want to make a backup copy on another disk. Common sense and Murphy's Law dictate that a safety backup copy should be made after each major revision.

The copy utility copies the entire document one page at a time. Page one is transferred from disk to RAM, displayed on the screen, and copied; page two is transferred from disk to RAM, displayed, copied and so on. Now, if you have a two-drive system, this is done automatically. All you do is sit and wait.

If you have a one-drive system (like me), be prepared for some hair-pulling. You have to manually swap disks after each page is copied. A 20 page document requires 20 exchanges of disks! Believe me, you will be cursing vehemently after the tenth swap.

Why not use the backup utility? That takes about 20 minutes and copies user and program material, overkill when you need a copy of one document. This, too, requires manual swapping of disks several times on a one-drive system.

Tandy programmers should make a special provision to utilize all available RAM so as many pages as possible are loaded into computer memory, copied, then RAM completely filled again and copied. Copying only one page at a time is needlessly inconvenient and wasteful of a 64K system's capabilities.

I have found two ways to ease this burden. I repaginate the document before copying it to ensure that each page completely fills the 8K slice. This means that each page is set to the full margin width (96 characters) and the maximum number of lines (84) with single spacing. A 15 page document with standard settings (margin width of 60 and 50 lines per page), when repaginated, becomes a six page document requiring only six disk exchanges. After the copy process, repaginate the original document back to the standard settings.

Second, break a long document into manageable chunks or chapters and treat each as a separate document. Revise and copy each as a smaller, independent entity. Combining this technique with the first one, you can usually keep each chapter to five or six pages (5,000-7,000 words).

If you need to combine some of the chapters into a longer unbroken document, use Scripsit's Assembly utility.

Scripsit would be more efficient if its developers had taken a tip from Scripsit for the Model I and the other micro-based programs and provided a RAM buffer large enough to hold and manipulate 15 to 20 pages of text. The only advantage of the program in its present form is that, in the event of a power failure, you lose a maximum of a single page. However, with most other word processing programs, you can also save to disk after each page.

The program does not print a page directly. Suppose you are working on page 12 of a document and decide you want a printout. You call up the print utility and give the instructions to print page 12. The video screen jumps back to page 1 and displays each page in order, one after the other, until page 12 appears, and then prints it. It would be useful to be able to print a selected portion of a page, but Scripsit prints the entire page or nothing at all.

Scripsit also lacks nonprinting text comments.

Conclusions

Scripsit is a satisfying and sophisticated word processing program with advanced, easy-to-use editing features and wide flexibility in formatting text. I like to print a copy of a rough draft. Word, logic and syntax errors seem easier to catch on a sheet of paper. Then I make the corrections on the screen. Having the text pages appear on the screen exactly as they do on the printout makes such revising much easier.

Scripsit will no doubt be the choice of more Model II owners than any other word processing program. Scripsit costs $300; Electric Pencil II (TRSDOS version) costs $350; Magic Wand ($400) and WordStar ($500) both require CP/M ($175). But these other programs do not support Radio Shack's Daisy Wheel Printer II; Model II owners who desire letter quality print are apt to choose this printer over the comparable but more expensive Diablo or NEC.

In the future look for an updated version of Scripsit with several enhanced features, including a dictionary to check for misspelled words. ■