

# BRAIN POWER

**In the introduction to our vertical software series (see page 844), we mentioned how Caxton Software's BrainStorm program was being used by a group of parents of teenage heroin addicts to organise their campaign against hard drugs. Here, we take a detailed look at this unique package.**

BrainStorm has been called a 'thought processor', but that doesn't mean that the program tries to supersede the brain. What BrainStorm really does is help you organise your thoughts. A direct analogy with pre-electronic methods is useful in understanding precisely what it does.

In planning any complex project, it helps to make lists of what you have to do. A list of the main objectives will generate sub-lists of how to complete each item on the preceding list, and so on until the planner gets dizzy from shuffling around pieces of paper. Any changes — deciding that a main list item should be in the sub-list of another item, for instance — can mean so much erasing and writing-in that the system becomes unmanageable. BrainStorm makes such changes and developments as simple as the cut-and-paste functions found on word processors — so the expression 'thought processor' isn't quite so misleading, after all.

Any item in each list or sub-list can be *promoted* into becoming the heading for a lower sub-list, and if similar activities in different lists need to be linked together, they can be given the same name, termed *namesakes*. In that case, anything added to a sub-list headed by a namesake is added to all the other lists using the namesake.

Anyone familiar with the rather unfriendly editing commands of a word processing package such as WordStar will find it quite easy to get used to the non-mnemonic cursor control commands. Pressing the Control key (CTRL) in conjunction

with the S key moves the cursor to the left. CTRL — D, CTRL — E and CTRL — X move the cursor right, up and down respectively, and these four keys make a logical pattern on the keyboard. In any case, it is possible to redefine these. Less easy to get used to is the fact that you can cursor up and down when entering text, but have to change to 'amend' mode (using CTRL — A) to move left or right within a line.

## PROGRAM OPERATION

BrainStorm's opening menu offers 11 options, each selected by an initial letter, most of which are self-explanatory: Use, Load, Print, ID Drive (to log-on to a different drive from the default), Clear (to erase the current model from memory), Save, Write (to print to disk), Directory, Xit, Merge, and Kill.

To begin, the user presses U, and the program enters typing mode immediately. Ideas can be entered as a more or less random list (known as a *model*). For instance, an example model might consist of:

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Read manual
Start typing list
Type sub-list
Edit list
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The control commands are not revealed immediately, but will be listed by pressing ?. By moving the cursor up to any item in the list and pressing CTRL — R, the designated item is 'promoted' to being the heading of a sub-list. Similarly, any item on that sub-list can be made the heading of a new sub-list, and so on until memory runs out. To get back to the previous list, CTRL — C is pressed.

Items can be moved around, either within lists or to lists on other levels, by labelling them with the @ sign, and then using CTRL — G (for Get) or CTRL — P (for Put) to execute the move. After CTRL — G is used, the @ sign automatically moves to the next item on the list; therefore, pressing CTRL — G again will get the next item, and so on. This is a valuable facility for moving a whole series of items to a lower or higher sub-list.

If you wish to insert new items within an existing list, all you have to do is to move the cursor to the beginning of the line that is to follow the new item, and type it in. When you press RETURN the rest of the list is moved down a line to make space for it. Pressing CTRL — A (for Amend) allows any item to be altered.

By giving items in different lists the same name — for example, a date — they become *namesakes* and are automatically cross-referenced. So if a given list required a certain event to happen on a

