Alternative View

Acorn's own processing package for the BBC Microcomputer, View, is also delivered as a Read Only Memory chip. Like Wordwise, it can be installed so that it self-loads whenever the machine is switched on, or it can be entered from BASIC.

View uses the power of the BBC Micro's video generator to offer 76, 74, 34, or 16-column displays, the character size changing to suit. This effect is produced by 'magnifying' the entire screen image; the screen then becomes a window that travels across the much larger virtual screen. The Mode command, which effects these changes, is one that operates in View's Command mode, as do the disk access commands, find-and-replace, and print commands.

View's find-and-replace facility, in addition to the normal function of searching through the document for every occurrence of a given word, allows what the manual describes as a 'wild search'. The word is specified in the normal way, but ? is substituted for any doubtful character. Hence, if the key word is entered as th??, the search will find that, then, them, they and so on, — in fact, every four letter word beginning with th. Of course, it is necessary to be rather careful when defining the wild card search key, or the exercise can become self-defeating. One other member of the command set, especially useful to journalists who are often paid by the number of words written, is the package's ability to count words in a piece of text. All too often, word processing packages only keep a tally of characters.

View's other operating protocol, known as Screen mode, is divided into two groups of commands: Immediate, which controls character insertion/deletion, cursor movement, block movements and the other 'one-off' requirements; and Stored, which looks after the parameters in the creation or editing of a document, page formatting, headers and footers and other continuing requirements. In Screen mode, View makes excellent use of the BBC Microcomputer's function keys, each of the 10 having three distinct uses depending on whether it is used alone or in conjunction with the Shift or Control keys

followed by a number, which sets the position of the Left Margin. Similarly LL for Line Length, IN for INdent, PL for Page Length and so on. Being mnemonic, these commands are easily remembered and entered into the text after pressing a function key. They do not appear in the previewed or printed text.

If embedded commands are not used, Wordwise defaults to sensible values: 70 characters for line length, 66 lines for page length and five spaces for the left margin. Thus a well laid out document can be provided even before you master the formatting commands.

Control codes for the printer to select italics, emphasise characters, double the size of the characters and other options may also be keyed in as embedded commands. We will see later how function keys can be re-defined to facilitate the entry of printer control codes.

Wordwise operates in a menu mode to save, load and print complete sections of text. The menu appears on the screen when Wordwise is selected and displays eight options. The first four options are concerned with loading and saving text onto, or from, disk or cassette.

Option five allows the user to search for and replace specific items of text. An example in an article such as this would be to replace the word 'type' with 'key in'. The choices in this option are either *global* or *selective*: the former enabling the replacement to take place for all occurrences in the text; while the latter allows the user to move the cursor to the first occurrence, then the next and so on, choosing whether to replace the word at each occurrence. Menu option six allows the text to be printed and option seven allows it to be previewed. Option eight saves the formatted text without embedded commands.

To change from menu to edit mode, you press the Escape key and the text appears with the cursor positioned where it was left. Because the screen displays text in the 40-column mode, it is often necessary to hop from edit mode to menu option seven (preview) when formatting the text. One slight problem is that the effect of tabulation markers is not shown on the screen and frequent previewing of the text is often required to check the final layout of the document when printed.

One interesting aspect of the BBC is that the user-defined function keys used by Wordwise to move and copy or delete text and perform other tasks can be re-defined for use with the CTRL and SHIFT keys to, for example, produce a new paragraph, delete a complete line or include a printer code as an embedded command. Used on their own, the function keys retain the Wordwise defined functions. The BBC star (*) commands are also handy. These can be used in the menu mode to select a printer type, select tape or disk or return the machine to BASIC by keying *B.

Wordwise is undoubtedly a useful addition to any BBC Micro and is simple to install and use. There are more expensive and sophisticated word processors available for the BBC, such as View, but Wordwise would seem to cover most requirements, and although it can store only about 4,500 words as a single document, much more can be stored externally on cassette or disk.

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