## The ULTIMATE

## SOFTWARE SELECTOR

For BUSINESS MICROS

VER 1000 UP-TO-DATE PACKAGES IN DETAIL



# The ULTIMATE SOFTWARE SELECTOR For BUSINESS MICROS

### Compiled by The Federation of Microsystems Centres



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First published 1984 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
London and Basingstoke
Associated Companies throughout the world

ISBN 0 333 37556 4

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Printed in Great Britain

### **FOREWORD**

bу

### JOHN BUTCHER MP Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry

No one these days would deny the importance of software in any computerization project, but this was not always the case. For many years software was the poor relation of hardware. Potential purchasers and users of computer systems tended to think in terms of their hardware requirements first and the software second. Not surprisingly, this approach often led to disappointment for consumers and manufacturers alike.

Knowing that software is important is only one half of the story. Knowing how to select the appropriate software for a particular application is the other and it is at this stage that many people encounter difficulties. The software industry has seen spectacular growth in the past decade, there are now literally thousands of different packages available covering all aspects of industrial and commercial life. If we are to ensure that business users of microcomputers are to make the best possible use of the material that is available, we need to provide them with advice and guidance on the selection of the most suitable product for their particular needs.

The Federation of Microsystems Centres, which receives pump priming support from the Department of Trade and Industry, currently has 16 members in major population centres around the United Kingdom providing a range of services to current and prospective users of microcomputers. With a few exceptions, each Centre is hosted by an academic institution on whose staff they can call for technical support. The services provided include open access workshops, training and advice on the features and capabilities of microcomputers and the associated software. The Federation's members operate under a Code of Practice which requires them to be totally independent of all commercial interests at all times. In this way its services are almost unique.

Arising from this activity, the Federation decided that it should provide a guide to the microcomputer software available and supported from within the United Kingdom for the business user. The Department supported this venture which we believe will provide a valuable service to a sector of the UK business community not presently catered for.

The Federation received good support from the UK software industry in supplying details of the microcomputer applications currently available. The details contained in the Software Selector provide the prospective user of the software with the valuable information required before making a purchasing decision.

I am confident that this publication will provide the business community with the information it requires for the effective acquisition of microcomputer software.

John Butches

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Software Selector is to provide information about available UK based microcomputer software for business applications. Would be purchasers are recommended to read first the chapter entitled 'Background to Software Acquisition'. This reading is particularly important for those who are not familiar with the concept of acquiring software off the shelf. The background information contained in the section is applicable to all types of business software.

Having studied the background information, the reader can then turn to the appropriate chapter of the main body of the Selector to look at the details of available software packages. Chapters 3-8 cover applications which spread across most types of business activity (ie general filing, payroll and accounting systems). Chapter 9 covers specific trades and professions: eg construction, retail, solicitors and other types of software programmes.

Each chapter is prefaced by an introductory article listing the salient features which could be important for the particular application area: capacity planning in production control, holiday accrual calculation in payroll, deletion by character/word/line in text editing. The reader can relate his own particular requirements to the listed facilities before examining the individual packages in detail. Packages in which only limited details were available are listed under Other Systems in Chapter 9.

In each listing of packages, the following items of information have been included, where known at the time of compilation.

Name. In some cases has been abbreviated.

Reference. To enable the reader to trace the supplier.

Operating System. Although operating systems for microcomputers are reasonably compatible, there can be limitations to applications run under different systems. Thus, before making the final selection, potential buyers should see the package performing under the operating system selected. Additionally, there could be similar limitations of use dependent on the configuration of equipment available to the buyer.

Price. The range is from under £50 to over £1000 and all prices are in pounds Sterling.

Having selected a software package which has the required attributes and will run on the operating system available, the reader can look up the supplier in the index using the reference for the chosen package. This will enable a potential purchaser to obtain further information about the software. Alternatively, the reader can find the name, address and telephone number of the nearest Microsystems Centre. The staff there will be only too pleased to discuss the software with the reader before acquisition is made.

### 2 BACKGROUND TO SOFTWARE ACQUISITION

### SOFTWARE TYPES

Business software for microcomputers can be considered to fall into three broad (partly overlapping) categories:

Prepackaged software. Designed to perform a specific task on a specific type (or types) of microcomputer all those running a particular operating system or programming language. This type of package usually runs without being modified, but small software amendments can be made to suit the particular hardware configuration.

Adaptable ('customizable') software. Designed to perform specific tasks but usually requiring modification to enable packages to run on the user's microcomputer and peripheral equipment.

Custom software. Written specifically to meet the user's equipment and application requirements.

### SOURCES OF SOFTWARE

The end-user can obtain software packages from three main types of sources:

Mail order suppliers. Advertise extensively in the trade press and supply software as an adjunct to hardware sales. In some cases the outlet is the mail order section of a specialist computer shop and here the support provided is generally minimal. A few specialist software houses supply packages by mail order. Their knowledge of the software can make them well qualified to advise on how their packages can be implemented in a wide range of computer configurations.

Retailers. A wide range of software packages can be obtained from specialist computer stores, most of whom also sell hardware and are able to offer a range of support services. These stores usually specialize in commercial/technical applications. Chain stores also sell computer hardware and software through their retail outlets, though much after-sales support is unlikely. These outlets concentrate on the domestic market rather than on business users. The increasing use of small computers will encourage the growth of specialist shops dealing in computer software, possibly in conjunction with record/video sales. Such outlets may offer basic business software but again the support is likely to be minimal.

Vertical market specialists. Focusing on a particular market and selling either through retail outlets or by mail order, their main concern is with custom software or with producing packages that may be customizable to suit end-user requirements. The software may be supplied with hardware or the user may be advised to obtain the hardware elsewhere. To purchase software and/or hardware from

these specialists often represents the safest approach for the user. However, they may charge more than the other types of software suppliers.

### SELECTING THE SOFTWARE PACKAGES

The selection of a software package is not an easy task. difficult for the end-user to determine precisely what support will be required. The end-user should recognize the difficulties at the start, acknowledging the element of risk involved and remembering that investment at stake may far exceed the nominal cost of been said that there are more unsatisfied than package. It has satisfied package users and it should be noted that particular software packages require different configurations according to the machines on which they run. This may increase the hardware cost more than the outlay for the software. It is therefore important determine and cost the equipment configuration that will be required before buying the software.

There are a number of options for the user who wishes to access the packages listed in this book. Members of the Federation of Microsystems Centres are prepared to supply more data on each entry. Further detailed information is also available where an evaluation has been carried out on a number of packages. The Federation may be willing to carry out evaluations where none has already been conducted on a specific package (or packages) in a particular area.

In addition, many of the computer journals publish information about packages, though this is usually provided by the package supplier and may be over-optimistic. Sometimes the journals describe evaluations carried out by their own staff or by independent contributors.

The user needs to be able to select the appropriate sources for his software and to ensure that the available support is adequate for his needs. Various problems can arise, for example:

- 1. A firm of professionals (such as accountants) considers purchasing an accounting package for internal use. They already own an apparently compatible microcomputer purchased for another purpose. They can judge the quality of the accounting package but may not be capable of implementing it on their own existing system.
- 2. A company has an in-house computer 'expert' who is capable of installing a system and implementing a package on it. However, he lacks the expertise to judge which of the many competing packages should be acquired.
- 3. A company purchases apparently compatible hardware and software at discounted prices from different sources but cannot make the system work.
- 4. A company acquires an electronic filing system. After considerable time is spent inputing data, it is realized that the system cannot present reports in the required format and cannot be modified.

### CONSIDERING THE AVAILABLE SUPPORT

The degree of support that the end-user requires varies according to the type of package and the end-user's business activity and computer experience. Often the user is not aware of the support that is required until after the package has been purchased. Then it may be found that the supplier is not capable of providing the support that is needed. There are great variations, from one supplier to another, in the amount of support offered; different suppliers do offer different levels of support for the same package.

When a user wishes to evaluate the packages and suppliers listed in the <u>Software Selector</u>, various criteria can be recommended. The level of detail that is necessary depends upon such factors as the extent of the user's technical knowledge, the size and relative significance of the expenditure, and the reputation of the particular supplier. Users should be aware that there are some packages that are almost industry standards and these products are widely available. They may be supplied on their own, as part of a hardware package or as an optional extra. The amount and type of available support will also vary.

In assessing the available support, there are various points to consider. How much support is required? Which suppliers are capable of providing it, and at what cost? Is training included within the software, or is additional user training needed? (Users will obviously vary in the amount of training they need). Can the available support be tailored to particular user needs? Must the support be obtained in a single block, or can some be provided before software implementation and some after (for example, to provide refresher training or training for new staff)? Does the support deal offer a 'free' element or a combination of 'free' and chargeable elements? In considering the support offered for particular software products, the potential user is advised to seek answers to the following questions:

- 1. What is the source of the support? Will it come directly from the producer of the package, from a dealer (whether or not the dealer is making the sale), or from some other source. Is that source located in this country? All the packages listed in this book are supported by at least one company located and doing business in the United Kingdom.
- 2. How is the support offered? Is contact made by letter only, and/or by telex? Is there a telephone contact specific to software purchasers or a general number? Is this a freefone? Is this contact with the producer of the software or an intermediary who may need to talk to a third party? If so, what is the relationship? Is this telephone manned full-time or covered by an answer-phone outside office hours? Does the support include a visit or visits to the user's premises? Is there any commitment to respond to requests for assistance within a specified time?
- 3. What training does the support include? Where will any training take place? Is the quantity of any training fixed or can it be varied according to the user's expertise? Is the training offered only on installation or is there any allowance for further

training once the user has some experience of operating the system (for refresher courses or for training new staff)?

- 4. How complete is the documentation? Is it available? Can you see it in advance of a purchase? Can it be used independently of the program to explain any difficulties the user may have that are due to inexperience? How readily can the user comprehend it?
- 5. What updating is offered? Many packages are updated periodically: as bugs are discovered and cured, improvements are devised or as the package becomes available with new operating systems. Some packages may require regular updates because of their function, (ie tax calculations, cost indices). Users should enquire how this will affect them. How will they be made aware of updates? Will there be an automatic mailing, advertisements in the trade press or some other approach? Will updates be provided free of charge? Will they be in a form, (a disk) that is readily added to the package? Will fresh documentation be included? Is there a policy of making updates compatible with previous versions?
- 6. warranties and guarantees are offered? How are they backed Is there a trade group prepared to act as supplier of last up? resort? Does the supplier seem able to fulfill his contractual obligations? There are no hard and fast rules but trade associations such as the Computer Services Association, Retailers Association and the British Microcomputer Manufacturers Group vet their members. Some companies choose not to join their trade associations, some are too new to be eligible, others are not allowed to join. Unless some specific provision has been made, such as the lodging of a master copy of the source code (the high-level language that users may readily comprehend) with a independent body, a guarantee may prove useless if the company providing it stops trading. For custom packages and prepackages that are integral to the user's operation, and where the user cannot purchase the source code, this may be a reasonable requirement. It may be regarded as good general practice, but is unlikely to be implemented in most cases.

The above questions should do to imply that any particular service provision is (or is not) a trade norm which the user may expect to be included in all circumstances. The questions are provided to encourage the prospective purchaser to find out what service he or she can expect. This will help to avoid the disappointment, inconvenience and (possibly) extra cost incurred when an anticipated service is not forthcoming.

### CONCLUSION

The optimum solution to a user's problems will depend upon the complexity of his requirements and the depth of his expertise. To acquire software packages through mail order represents the greatest risk (although the expert user may find a bargain). There is least risk when a user deals with a local outlet which has a proven ability to understand the user's business and to deal with any problems which might arise. THE user must also recognize that there is a definite relationship between the price paid and any 'free' service that is offered. He should be prepared to pay extra for additional support. Buying a cheap solution may prove to be a false economy.

It should also be remembered that disappointment in the use of business software can also arise when the user has failed to give adequate consideration to proper accounting controls, physical security or suitable back-up files: it is not always the software that is at fault.

The prospective user is well advised to deal with companies who are members of recognized trade associations. The Computer Retailers Association includes members who are qualified to give independent and impartial advice on (and to supply) microcomputer hardware and software. Intending purchasers should take into account the effect that a retailer's dealership connections may have on his impartiality.

The other organizations listed at the end of the book have members who are well qualified to give independent and impartial advice on microcomputer software and installation. Many individuals are members of more than one such organization.

Impartial information and advice on all aspects of microcomputing, may also be obtained, from members of the Federation of Microsystems Centres.

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### 3 DATABASE / GENERAL FILING SYSTEMS

There is considerable confusion about what the term 'database' means. Software suppliers can be found who use it to describe a large, complex, highly structured collection of data describing characters of many different types of interest in some environment and the relationships between them to almost any collection of data items. Many of the more modest products presented as 'database management systems' (DBMS) do not warrant the use of the term, and are best described as electronic filing systems.

Perhaps the best way to recognize a database rather than a set of files is to ask if it supports several integrated but distinct information systems and is implemented primarily to facilitate sharing the data rather than optimizing the performance of any individual access. If the answer is 'yes' and more than one entity type is involved then we have a database, otherwise we have a file.

The features selected for a classification scheme to categorize relevant products must be capable of distinguishing important features of sophisticated, and relatively expensive, software systems which provide several of the major advantages expected of a true database system:

- 1. The ability to share data amongst many users and programme.
- Independence of data and programme: the ability to change the database structure and details without requiring re-compilation of programme.
- 3. High-level interfaces to allow in-expert users to address powerful queries and updates to the database.
- 4. Substantial security and integrity features.

At the same time, the less ambitious features required by users wanting to make data more accessible and useable but at more modest costs and involving simpler operational details must be representable using the classification scheme.

A direct result of using such a scheme is that some products, mainly at the 'filing system' end of the spectrum, may at first appear to be lacking many features and yet may be excellent tools for their planned purpose. The aim of the categorization process is not to find products having every possible required characteristic but rather to allow a user to survey this wide marketplace for products to suit a particular function and pocket. Thereby it is hoped to eliminate some of the confusion outlined above.

Varibl Varibl Operate Data Local Hier Net Rela Length Length Float Ref System Price Ind Views arcy work tion Fields Rords Point Index Invert ACCESS MO43 ABF 501-1000 N Υ Ν N N Ν N Ν N Ν AUTOCODE S018 AB 201-300 -Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν N CARDBOX PLUS B005 ABC 301-400 -Υ Ν Ν Υ Y Υ Ν Y CARDBOX(CARD INDEX) C004 AB 151-200 N Υ Y Y Ν Ν Ν M019 AB 51-100 CLIP N N CODEWRITER D014 BEF 51-100 N Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ N K008 K(WICAT 1000+ N Υ N Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν DATA WRITER M012 HN 101-150 N Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ DATASTAR M019 A 151-200 Y Ν Υ Υ Υ Y Υ Ν E001 AB 401-500 Y Υ Υ DRASE N Ν Ν Ν Ν N N DBMS 111.7 & THE KEY G005 AB 201-300 Y Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ N 401-500 N Υ DELTA C002 ABC N Υ Ν Ν Υ M019 A < 50 Υ DESPOOL Ν DMS COO2 ABC 401-500 N Υ N N Υ N N N Υ Υ Υ Υ **ENBASE** S015 H 51-100 N N Υ Ν Ν Ν FILESHARE M019 C 201-300 -Υ Υ 101-150 N Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ MO19 ACN Ν FORMS-II FRONTRUNNER D004 AB 151-200 -Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ H011 A unstated Y Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν H-BASE Υ HY-BIS H011 A 151-200 N Ν Υ Ν M039 K 1000+ Υ Υ Υ Υ INFORMIX Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν T006 AB 201-300 N Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν INFOSTAR Ν Υ Υ N Υ INSTANT SORT/SEARCH M012 HN < 50 Ν Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν KNOWLEDGEMAN T004 AB 301-400 Y Υ N Υ Ν Υ MANDATE C039 AC 201-300 -Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ MDBS 111 T004 ABCIK 1000+ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν 1000+ Y Υ N Ν Υ MICRO-CAIRS L004 AB MICROTEK CUSTOMER DB M031 N 151-200 N Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν B013 FM 201~300 N Ν N Ν Ν Ν N OMNIS N N 501-1000 Y Υ Y Y PARADISE U002 K Υ Υ Υ Υ PASCAL FOUNDATION S023 M 301-400 -Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ **PREFACE** H011 A unstated Y Υ Υ N PROFILE PLUS TO10 HKN 151-200 N Υ Υ N Υ Υ Ν Υ N 301-400 Y Υ Υ Υ Υ PULSAR DBASE II A028 AB Υ Υ N N PULSAR INFORMER A028 B 201-300 Y N Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν QUICKCODE MO19 ACN 201-300 -Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν N 101-150 Y QUICKSCREEN M019 ACEN N Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ RESCUE DATABASE Q002 ABG 201-300 Y Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν SELECTIVE M012 HN 51-100 N Υ Ν Ν

OPERATING SYSTEMS:

M019 AC

SELECTOR-V

A = CPM 80/86 D = CCPM 86 G = PCOS

301-400 N

Ν

J = BOS M = UCSD-P

B = MS/PC DOS E = APPLE H = TRS DOS K = UNIX TYPE N = OTHERS

Ν

C = MPM 80/86 F = CBM

i = TURBO DOS L = PICK

DDL DML Com Mea Data Data Inte Crea Multi Multi B- Hash Pres Space Reor sure Dscrp Manip Query Accss Log grity tion Data Up Back List tree ing sion Mgmt gnztn ment Lang Lang Rprtr Cntrl ging Checks Aids Dict Sort dates Up Btch Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Y Υ Υ Ν Ν N Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ N Ν Ν N Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ N Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ N Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν N N N N Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ N Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ N Ν Υ N Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ N Ν Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Y Ν Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν N Υ Ν Υ N Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν N N Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν N Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν N Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν N Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Y Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Y Υ Υ Υ N Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ N Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Y Ν N Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν N Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν Y Υ Υ Ν N Y Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν N Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Y Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν N Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ N Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ N Υ Υ Ν Ν N Υ Ν Ν Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ N Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Ν Ν Ν Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Υ N Υ N N N Ν Ν Υ Ν N N Υ Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Υ Ν N Ν Υ Y Υ N N Y Ν Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Υ Y Υ Ν Ν Υ Υ Ν Υ Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν Ν

Y ≠ YES

N = NO

- = NOT APPLICABLE

### DATABASE (see also page 86)

Name	Ref	Operate System	Price						•	Varibl Length Rcrds		Index	Invert
STRIX	D008	N	501-1000	Y	Υ	N	N	N	Y	Y	 N	N	Υ
SUPERFILE+SUPERFORMS	S008	AB	401-500	Y	Y	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Y	Υ	N	Υ
SUPERSORT	T006	Α	101-150	-	-	-	_	-	Υ	Y	-	-	-
THE FORMULA	T006	AB	301-400	N	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	N	N	N	Y
TOMORROW'S OFFICE	S003	В	501-1000	Y	Υ	-	-	Y	N	N	N	Υ	N
TOMORROWS OFFICE 2.0	S003	В	501-1000	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Y	Y	Y	N	Υ	Y
ULTIMATE INFORMATION	0008	AN	unstated	Υ	Υ	N	N	Υ	Υ	Y	Υ	Υ	N
VISIDEX	R013	E	151-200	Υ	Υ	N	N	-	Υ	Υ	N	Υ	N
VISIFILE	R013	BE	151-200	Υ	Υ	N	N	Υ	Υ	N	N	Υ	N

### \*\*\*END\*\*\*

OPERATING SYSTEMS:

A = CPM 80/86 D = CCPM 86 G = PCOS J = BOS M = UCSD-P B = MS/PC DOS E = APPLE H = TRS DOS K = UNIX TYPE N = OTHERS C = MPM 80/86 F = CBM I = TURBO DOS L = PICK