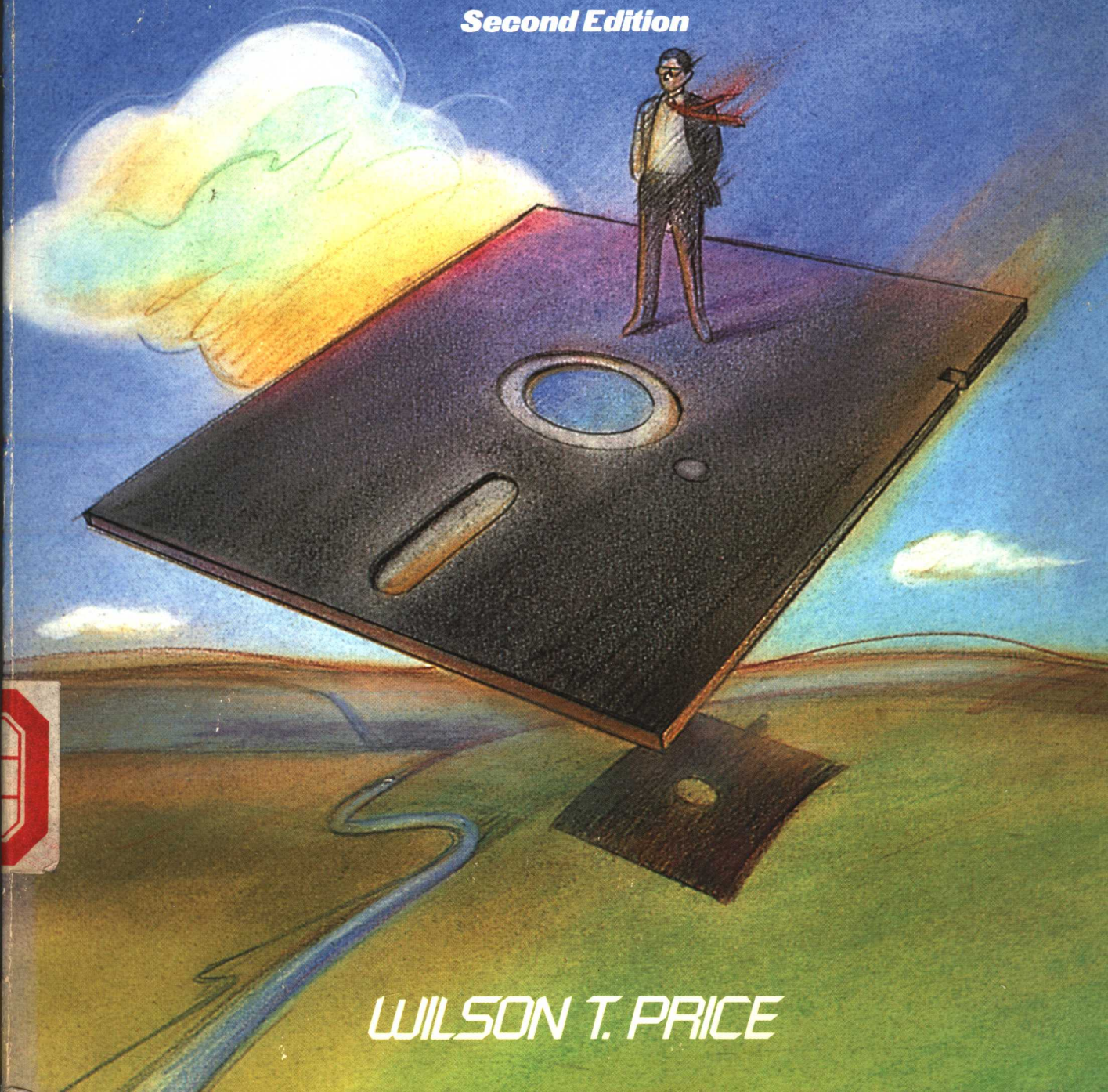


COMPUTERS AND PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE AN INTRODUCTION

Second Edition



WILSON T. PRICE

***COMPUTERS AND
PRODUCTIVITY
SOFTWARE***

Second Edition

162

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Preface

What a difference 25 years makes! During that time, we have seen the computer come from virtually nowhere to a device having a profound influence on our lives. Mirroring that rapid change, we have also seen a wide spectrum of courses teaching about computers and how to use them. This book is another in the rapid evolution of the field; it is intended to be used in a first course on computers and information processing. The book echoes the quickly occurring changes that have taken place due to the personal computer. It has long been apparent to educators that in order for a beginner to feel the real impact of what the computer is all about, a certain amount of "hands-on" experience is necessary. To a great degree, this hands-on experience has been provided by teaching Basic or some other programming language. For the average student who needs a general knowledge of the computer and what it can do, learning a little bit about a programming language does not have much value. This course should teach "driver training" not "principles of automotive design." The best way to do this is with the powerful *productivity software* now widely used on personal computers: word processing, spreadsheet, and file management.

For three semesters prior to the publication of this book, I taught a general introductory course in which productivity software was an integral part. In over 20 years of teaching this course, I have never encountered such enthusiasm for the genuine value of the material being taught. Students have been impressed by the convenience of using a word processor for preparing documents. They think of many different ways in which they might set up a "database" and use a file management system. This is in contrast to days gone by when the general reaction was, "When is the final? I want to forget about Basic the day after." There is no question in my mind that the route of productivity software is the one to take in a first course.

That is, in fact, the approach taken in this book. The key to this approach is the software: where does it come from for classroom use? From a regular software vendor: THORN EMI Computer Software, Inc. For the purpose of this book, THORN EMI has provided two options: the complete commercial version of the successful Perfect Writer, Perfect Calc, and Perfect Filer systems as well as a limited educational version. The educational software includes some minor restrictions to limit its value in a production environment but which were carefully selected so as not to inhibit its value for teaching. (The software is available for the IBM PC and the Apple IIe and IIc.) The primary focus of the hands-on portion of this book is this productivity software. Learning how to use the software is the most important single feature of the book; it is an integral part of the book—not simply an afterthought.

In order to provide the student with the broad understanding needed, this book is divided into two major parts.

Part 1 General Concepts of Data Processing (5 chapters)

The computer: what is it and how does it work? This portion of the book introduces the general principles that form the background for the understanding of computers in our lives. Chapter 5 focuses on personal computers.

Part 2 Productivity Software (7 chapters)

The three cornerstones of productivity software—word processing, spreadsheet, and file management—are the focus of this portion of the book. Each of these topics includes a generic chapter followed by a software specific chapter (file management includes two such chapters). The Perfect software chapters describe in detail how to use the various features of the software by means of extensive examples.

Overall, the attempt has been to make this a student's book. Some of its other important features are:

1. Each chapter opens with a statement of objectives and a vocabulary list, and closes with a summary and a set of exercises.
2. Each chapter includes "mind-jogger" exercises within it, with answers at the end of the chapter. The intent is to provide a reinforcement vehicle for important concepts.
3. Each new topic is introduced through and oriented around a simple example. Each example is described in detail, its implications are discussed, it is solved, and important features of the solution are described.
4. Wide use is made of illustrations, especially in Part 2 where the student must use Perfect software.

Supplementary Materials

Without a doubt, this book sets a new standard regarding supplements for improving the quality of the course. The main feature is the inclusion of Perfect software as follows:

- Diskettes containing Perfect Writer, Perfect Calc and Perfect Filer (for the IBM PC or the Apple IIe or IIc) which may be duplicated for student use at no cost.
- A complete set of Perfect Software manuals.
- Several sets of files for Perfect Filer that can be used by the student for homework assignments.

In addition, the adoption package includes the CBS College Publishing Test Management System (TMS)—a software system for managing test banks—and a computerized test bank of nearly 2000 questions. Using TMS, it is possible to:

- Quickly prepare printed examinations by selecting questions at random from the test bank.
- Provide for interactive quizzing using questions selected from the computerized test bank.
- Modify or expand existing test banks, or create new ones.

In the more conventional vein, there is also a comprehensive *Instructor's Manual* with reproductions of many key figures from the book that can be used as transparency masters. It also includes a large number of additional assignments for the productivity software. The assignments for the Perfect Filer chapters are coordinated with additional sample "databases" included on the distribution diskettes. The student *Study Guide* is designed to provide a truly functional and valuable learning tool.

Perfect Software

Two versions of the Perfect software required for this book are available *at no charge* to institutions using this book. The complete commercial versions of Perfect Writer, Perfect Calc and Perfect Filer may be obtained from CBS College Publishing. The commercial version is complete in every respect. An educational version of the same software is available from CBS College Publishing. The former is available via a site license and the latter without a site license (both at no charge).

The educational version is somewhat limited in its scope although it is adequate for almost all of the functions that are needed in a beginning course. The primary restrictions (relating to descriptions in this text) of the educational versions are as follows.

Perfect Writer

- Maximum document size is approximately 25 pages
- No more than six documents can be stored on a disk at any one time.

Perfect Calc

- Maximum spreadsheet size is 60 rows by 30 columns.
- Linking spreadsheets not allowed.
- Printer output to a file not allowed.
- No more than six spreadsheets can be stored on a disk at any one time

Perfect Filer

- Maximum number of records in a file is 50.
- Printer output to a file not allowed.
- No more than six files can be stored on a disk at any one time.

If you have the educational version, then be aware of these limitations when you are using the respective pieces of software.

Acknowledgments

Only one name appears on the cover as author of this book, but that is only part of the picture. Many students, fellow teachers and others have contributed immensely to the overall nature of the book. I would like to express special appreciation to the following individuals who contributed their own creativity, helped me implement my ideas, and/or kept this project going.

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Wilson T. Price

Brief Contents

Preface	xv
Part 1 GENERAL CONCEPTS OF DATA PROCESSING	1
Chapter 1. The Influence of the Computer	2
BOX: Of Potato Chips and Microchips	26
Chapter 2. Computers and Computer Hardware	48
BOX: Cloak and Dagger Computers	87
Chapter 3. Computer Input/Output and Auxiliary Storage	96
BOX: Time to Reorder	121
Chapter 4. Advanced Software Systems	142
BOX: Getting Your Files: Where You Stand	191
Chapter 5. The Personal Computer	200
BOX: And Now We Have Computer Clones	214
Part 2 PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE	230
Prologue: An Introduction to Perfect Software	233
Chapter 6. Principles of Word Processing	242
BOX: Hello Word Processor—Goodbye Typewriter	260
Chapter 7. Perfect Writer	278
BOX: What, Electronic Publishing?	305
Chapter 8. Introduction to Spreadsheet Principles	344
BOX: Tax Time? Let The Computer Do It.	355
Chapter 9. Using Perfect Calc	366
BOX: It Couldn't Happen to a Nicer Spreadsheet	405
Chapter 10. Introduction to File Management Principles	436
BOX: And Now I Telecommunicate My Database	454
Chapter 11. Introduction to Perfect Filer	472
BOX: How to Fix a Database	494
Chapter 12. Advanced Perfect Filer Concepts	524
BOX: So You Thought You Had Database Problems	535
Appendix I. The ASCII Character Set	554
Glossary	557
Index	571

Detailed Contents

Preface	xv
Part 1 GENERAL CONCEPTS OF DATA PROCESSING	1
Chapter 1. The Influence of the Computer	2
Objectives	2
Section 1. Concepts of Data Processing	4
Introduction to PQR Wholesale Grocery	4
Basic Concepts 4 The Nature of Business 5	
The Customer Accounting System	7
Data Input 8 Customer Master Record and File 12	
The Account Updating Procedure 12	
Data Processing Aspects of This Case Study	16
Basic Terminology 16 Data Collection and	
Recording 17 Sorting 18 Merging 18 Calculating and	
Summarizing 18 Report Generation 18 Master-Detail	
Processing 19	
Section 2. Computers in Our Lives	20
The Computer in the Supermarket	20
The Nature of Inventions 20 Records and Files in the	
Computer 21 Evolution of the Universal Product Code 22	
The Automated Checkstand 22 Reactions to the System 28	
Analysis of Complaints	29
Pet Projects Were Dropped 29 The Computer Is Impersonal and	
Dehumanizing 30 Everything is Chaos 31 It Will Put People	
Out of Work 31 Errors Made by the Computer 33	
The Computer Can Be Outsmarted 34	
Section 3. Using the Computer in Business	37
A Typical Processing Cycle	37
Generating an Order 37 The Sequence of Events 38	
Order Processing 39 Invoicing 40 Receiving the Ordered	
Goods at the Supermarket 41 Processing the Payment 42	
System Design	42
In Retrospect	43
Answers to Preceding Exercises	44
Additional Exercises	45
Chapter 2. Computers and Computer Hardware	48
Objectives	48
Section 1. Evolution of Computing Devices	50
Section 2. What Is a Computer?	57
Introduction	57
A Human Computer System 57 What Can a Computer Do? 59	
Logical Components of the Computer	60
Computer Logical Structure 60 Input/Output 63	
The Arithmetic/Logic Unit 63 The Control Unit 65	

Computer Memory 68	Auxiliary Storage 71	
Computer Systems		73
The Concept of a Computer Family	73	
Mainframe Computers 73	The Minicomputer 75	
The Microcomputer 77	The Small Business Computer 80	
Section 3. Technical Aspects of Computer Memory		82
Internal Codes		82
The Nature of Binary Numbers 82	The Extended Binary-Coded	
Decimal Interchange Code 83	The American Standard Code for	
Information Interchange 85		
Fields Within the Computer		89
Variable-Length Fields in the Computer 89	Fixed-Word-Length	
Concepts 89	Characteristics of Modern Computers 90	
In Retrospect		91
Answers to Preceding Exercises		92
Additional Exercises		93
 Chapter 3. Computer Input/Output and Auxiliary Storage		96
Section 1. Input to the Computer		98
Basic Data-Entry Concepts		98
The Punched Card 98	Offline Data Entry and the Punched	
Card 100	Magnetic-Tape Encoder 102	
Data-Entry Systems 103	Disk-Oriented	
Terminals		106
Online Data Entry 106	Basic Characteristics 107	
with CRT Terminals 108	Data Entry	
Microcomputers and Mainframes 110		
Bar Codes for Data Entry		110
Coding Data with Bar Codes 110		
Bar Code Processing Devices 111		
Specialized Input Devices		112
Magnetic-Ink Character Recognition (MICR) 112		
Optical Readers 114		
Section 2. Output from the Computer		116
Printed Output		116
Impact and Nonimpact Printers		117
Impact Printers 117	Nonimpact Printers 119	
Serial, Line, and Page Printers		120
Serial Printers 120	Line Printers 122	
Page Printers 122		
Computer Output Microfilm (COM)		123
Micrographics 124	COM Systems 124	
Soft-Copy Output		125
Section 3. Auxiliary Storage		127
Magnetic Tape		127
Basic Concepts of Tape 127	Tape Processing 129	
Using a		
Tape for Data Backup 130		
Magnetic-Disk Storage		131
The Need for Direct Access 131	Addressability of Auxiliary	
Storage Devices 131	The Magnetic-Disk Concept 132	
File Processing on Direct-Access Devices 136		
Answers to Preceding Exercises		137
Additional Exercises		139

Chapter 4. Advanced Software Systems	142
Objectives	142
Section 1. Principles of Operating Systems	144
The Operating System Concept	144
Classification of Software 144 Basic Concepts of an Operating System 144 Computer Libraries 145 Supervisor Program 146	
Automatic Job Control 148	
Multiprogramming	149
Improving System Efficiency 149 What Is Multiprogramming? 150	
Online Processing and Multiprogramming 152	
Timesharing	154
The Concept of Timesharing 154 The Timesharing System 155	
Section 2. Data Management Principles	158
Concepts of File Management	158
The Concept of the Key Field 158 File Management Systems 159 Sequentially Organized Files 159 Direct-Access File Organization 160 Random Files 161 Indexed Files 162	
Database Management Systems	163
An Example Application 163 The Concept of a Database 166	
A Database Example 166	
Distributed Data Processing	167
Distributed Access to a Central Computer 167 Distributing the Processing Load 168 Distributing the Database 171	
Section 3. Data Communications	173
Principles of Data Communication	173
Introduction 173 What Is Data Communication? 173	
Data Transmission 175	
Data Communication Services	177
Data Transmission Modes 177 Transmission Speed 178	
The Standard Interface 179	
Section 4. Other Topics	181
Computer Networks in Our Lives	181
Electronic Funds Transfer 181 A Conventional Checking Transaction 181 An Electronic Transaction 182	
Electronic Message Systems 183	
Data Security	185
File Protection 185 Security of Information from Misuse 186	
Security Measures for Protection of Data 188	
Personal Privacy	189
In Retrospect	192
Answers to Preceding Exercises	193
Additional Exercises	195
Chapter 5. The Personal Computer	200
Objectives	200
Basic Components of the Personal Computer	201
Introduction 201 The Microprocessor 204 The Keyboard 206	
The Video Display 207	
Peripheral Devices	208
Auxiliary Storage 208 Winchester Disk Drives and Tape Backup 209 The Printer 212 Expansion Slots 216	

Software	218
Operating Systems 218 Booting Up Under an Operating System 219 Disk Files 220 Toward More Efficiency 221	
Other Software 221	
Microcomputers and Networks	223
Microcomputers Operating in Conjunction with Mainframes 223	
Local Area Networks 225	
Answers to Preceding Exercises	227
Additional Exercises	228

Part 2 PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE **230**

Prologue: An Introduction to Perfect Software **233**

Objectives **233**

Basic Principles	234
Introduction 234 Computers and Computer Keyboards 235	
Disk Files 237	
Using Menus	238
The Concept of Menus 238 Getting Out of a Menu 241	
The REPEAT Command 241 Getting Help—IBM Only 241	

Chapter 6. Principles of Word Processing **242**

Objectives **242**

Processing a Document	243
Preparing a Letter 243 Categorizing Corrections 246	
Preparing the Final Document 247 Document Planning 250	
Summarizing the Overall Task 252	
What Is a Word Processor?	252
How Does a Word Processor Work?	254
A Crude Word Processor 254 A Sample Document 256	
Using Commands 258 Margins and Line Filling 258 Starting a New Paragraph 262 Line Breaks 263 The Final Document 264	
Common Features of Word Processors	267
About Commands 267 Formatting 268 Viewing a Document on the Screen 270 Word Wrap 271 Editing 272 Searching a Document 273	
In Retrospect	274
Answers to Preceding Exercises	275
Additional Exercises	276

Chapter 7. Perfect Writer **278**

Objectives **278**

Section 1. Basic Principles	280
Getting Started	280
The Main PSI Menu 280 The Screen 280 Entering Text 282	
Simple Deletions 284 Cursor Movement and Making Minor Corrections 286	
Cursor Movement Using Commands	288
Key Sequence for Commands 288 Summarizing Cursor Movement Commands 290	

Changing the Appearance of a Document	293
Using the Fill Command 293	Invisible Characters 296
Using the Documents Command for Output	298
Saving a Document to Disk 298	Reading a Document from
Disk 300	The Print Command 303
	The Exit PW Command 304
Section 2. Advanced Concepts	306
Cut-And-Paste Operations	306
The Cut Command 307	Summarizing the Cut Command
Options 308	The Cut-Save Area 309
	The Paste Command 309
Marking Text 310	
Search and Search/Replace	313
The Search Command 313	The Replace Command 315
More on Editing—The Appearance Command	317
Word Operations 317	Centering a Line 319
	Justifying a Paragraph 319
	Underlining Text (IBM Only) 319
	Changing Margin Settings 320
	Formatting a Document—An Example 321
Using Two Windows	323
The Basic Concept of Using Two Windows 323	Creating and
Using Two Windows 325	
Disabling the Wrap Feature	328
USING PERFECT SPELLER AND THESAURUS	329
Perfect Speller	329
Introduction 329	Checking Spelling 331
	Making Corrections 334
Perfect Thesaurus	336
Introduction 336	Using the Thesaurus 336
Answers to Preceding Exercises	339
Additional Exercise	341
Word-Processing Assignments	341
Chapter 8. Introduction to Spreadsheet Principles	344
Objectives	344
A Problem of the Budget	345
Introduction 345	The Nature of the Spreadsheet 347
	Using the Spreadsheet as a Planning Tool 347
	Formalizing Spreadsheet Concepts 349
	Introduction 349
	Characteristics of the Electronic Spreadsheet Concept 350
	Formulas 352
	Simulating an Electronic Spreadsheet 354
	A Spreadsheet Template 354
	Characteristics of an Electronic Spreadsheet
	356
General Features 356	The Basic "Programming" Tools of Electronic Spreadsheets 358
	The Electronic Window 362
Answers to Preceding Exercises	364
Additional Exercises	365
Chapter 9. Using Perfect Calc	366
Objectives	366
Section 1. Basic Principles	368
The Spreadsheet Screen	368
The Perfect Calc Spreadsheet 368	Moving the Cursor 370
Scrolling the Window 371	
Entering Information to the Spreadsheet	373
Entering Labels 373	About the Cell Width 375

Entering Numbers 376	More About Entering Labels 378	379
Formulas		
Entering Formulas 379	Rules for Building Formulas 382	
Changing the Entries in Cells		383
Changing Labels 383	Changing Numbers 384	
Changing Formulas 386	Getting Out of Trouble 387	
Using the Datasheets Command for Output		387
Saving a Spreadsheet to Disk 387	Reading a Spreadsheet from Disk 390	
Determining What Is Stored on a Disk 390		
The Print Command 392	The Exit PC Command 393	
Modifying the Spreadsheet		394
Deleting an Entry 394	Using the Text Marking Command 395	
The Save Area 397	The Copy Command 398	
Using the Paste Command for Numbers 398		
The Principle of Replication		401
Relative and Absolute Cell Address References 401		
Replicating a Formula 402		
Completing the Budget Spreadsheet		404
Section 2. Advanced Concepts		406
Using the Appearance Command		406
The Justify Command 406	The Format Command 407	
Changing the Column Widths 408		
Changing the Size of a Spreadsheet		410
The Open Command 410	Closing Rows or Columns 412	
The Effect of Opening and Closing on Formulas 413		
Editing Cell Entries		413
The Use of Functions		416
Introduction 416	Some Typical Perfect Calc Functions 417	
Maintaining Statistics with a Spreadsheet 418		
Sorting Entries on a Spreadsheet (IBM Only)		419
Using Multiple Worksheets		421
USING PERFECT WRITER AND PERFECT CALC TOGETHER		424
Including a Spreadsheet in a Document		424
Introduction 424	Preparing the Spreadsheet 425	
Inserting the Spreadsheet into a Document 426	Further Document	
Editing 428	Printing the Letter 431	
Answers to Preceding Exercises		433
Additional Exercises		434
Spreadsheet Assignments		435
 Chapter 10. Introduction to File Management Principles		 436
Objectives		436
Principles of Files		437
Example Definition 437	Managing Data Within Files 443	
Basic Features of Data Management Systems		445
Record Format Definition 445	User Software Tools 448	
A Simple Example		448
File Definition 449	Data Types 450	
Records in the File		451
A Manual System 451	Using the File 455	
Computerized Concepts		457

Indexing a File	457	Sort Pointer Files	459	Record Selection	
by Comparison	460	Record Selection by Matching	462		
Report Generation	463				
Features of Database Management Systems					466
Linking Files	466	Performing Calculations	469		
Answers to Preceding Exercises					469
Additional Exercises					471

Chapter 11. Introduction to Perfect Filer **472**

Objectives **472**

Basic Principles of Displaying Records					473
Introduction	473	Reviewing Records in a Data File	474		
Generating a List	477				
Sorting					482
Multiple-Field Sort	485				
Record Selection by Matching					487
Single Criterion	487	Multiple Criteria	490		
Correcting Errors	493				
Record Selection by Comparison					495
Simple Comparisons	495	Combining Matching and Comparison			
497		Saving a Selection (Group) Definition	498	Combining Selection	
with Sorting	500	Summarizing Report Generation with Grouping			
and Sorting	501				
Generating Form Letters					502
Field Names	502	An Example of a Form Letter	505		
Generating a Listing Report					508
A Sample Report	508	Format Commands	508	An Alternate	
Formatting Method	511	Preparing a Format File with			
Perfect Writer	512				
Other Report Formatting Features					513
Additional Commands	513	Improving the Appearance			
of Reports	514	The Header Command	515	Including a	
Perfect Filer Report in a Perfect Writer Document	518				
Answers to Preceding Exercises					518
Additional Exercises					520
File Management Problems					521

Chapter 12. Advanced Perfect Filer Concepts **524**

Objectives **524**

Changing the Contents of a File					525
Editing Records	525	Removing Records from a File	529		
Adding Records	530				
Defining a New Data File					532
Example Definition	532	Field Names	533	Defining the	
Record Form	536	Defining Field Names	540	The First Field	
of the Screen Record Form	541				
Group Entries					542
Introduction	542	The Name Group Entry	544	The Date	
Group Entry	546	The Money Group Entry	547	The Record ID	

Group Entry	548	The Yes/No Group Entry	549	Summarizing	
Group Entries	550				
In Retrospect					550
Answers to Preceding Exercises					551
File Management Problems					552
<i>Appendix I. The ASCII Character Set</i>					554
<i>Glossary</i>					557
<i>Index</i>					571

This part is designed to provide a broad insight into the general field of data processing. It includes topics such as the following.

- Examples to illustrate the basic nature of data processing and some of the terminology commonly used
- Descriptions of computer hardware (the actual machines themselves) and a variety of devices for getting information into and out of the computer
- The nature of computer software (programs that make the computer work)

Many of the topics described will serve as the basis for learning how to use computers, the topics of Part 2.

