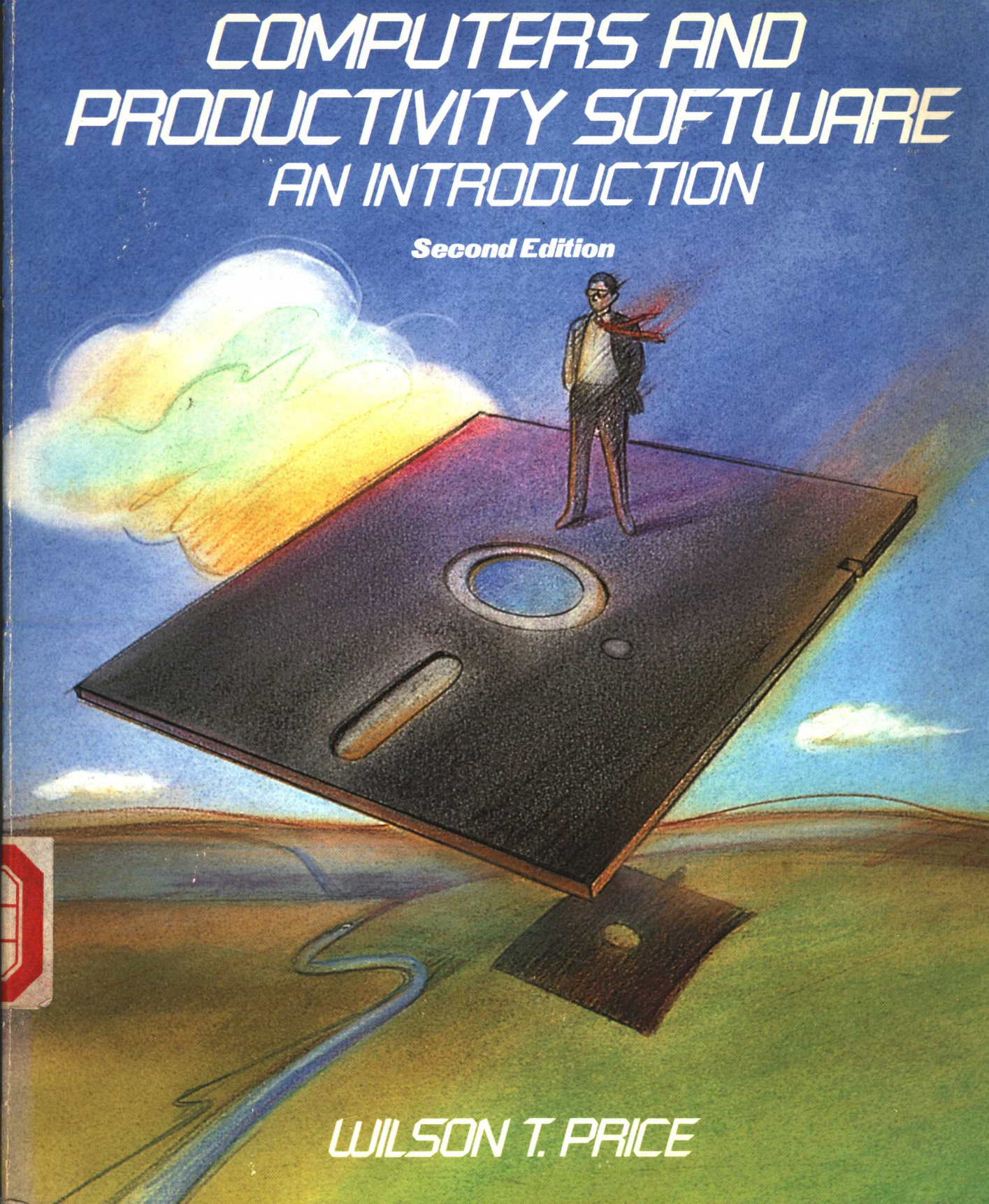
COMPUTERS AND PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE

AN INTRODUCTION

Second Edition



WILSON T. PRICE

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Second Edition

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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.

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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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I simply cannot say enough about the assistance provided. The cartoons, each of which relates to the topic that it accompanies and really adds to the flavor, were all done by Tony Cresci. The people at THORN EMI and Perfect Software were just great in making available non-fee site licenses to schools and in concurrently setting up a special educational software so that it would retain all of the important features necessary to a successful learning tool. My first exposure to database systems was while working on a project with Nancy Dickey at Merritt College. She was to have learned from me; I learned from her. This is reflected in Chapters 10 through 12. Were it not for the persistent efforts of John Woods, we might never have gotten together with THORN EMI Computer Software, Inc. The tone of the remarks and suggestions from the in-depth reviewers indicated that they were really "into" this book; their enthusiasm and comments were most appreciated. The bottom line is that a terrific collection of people contributed to the book—they all have my sincerest thanks.

Wilson T. Price

Brief Contents

Detailed Contents

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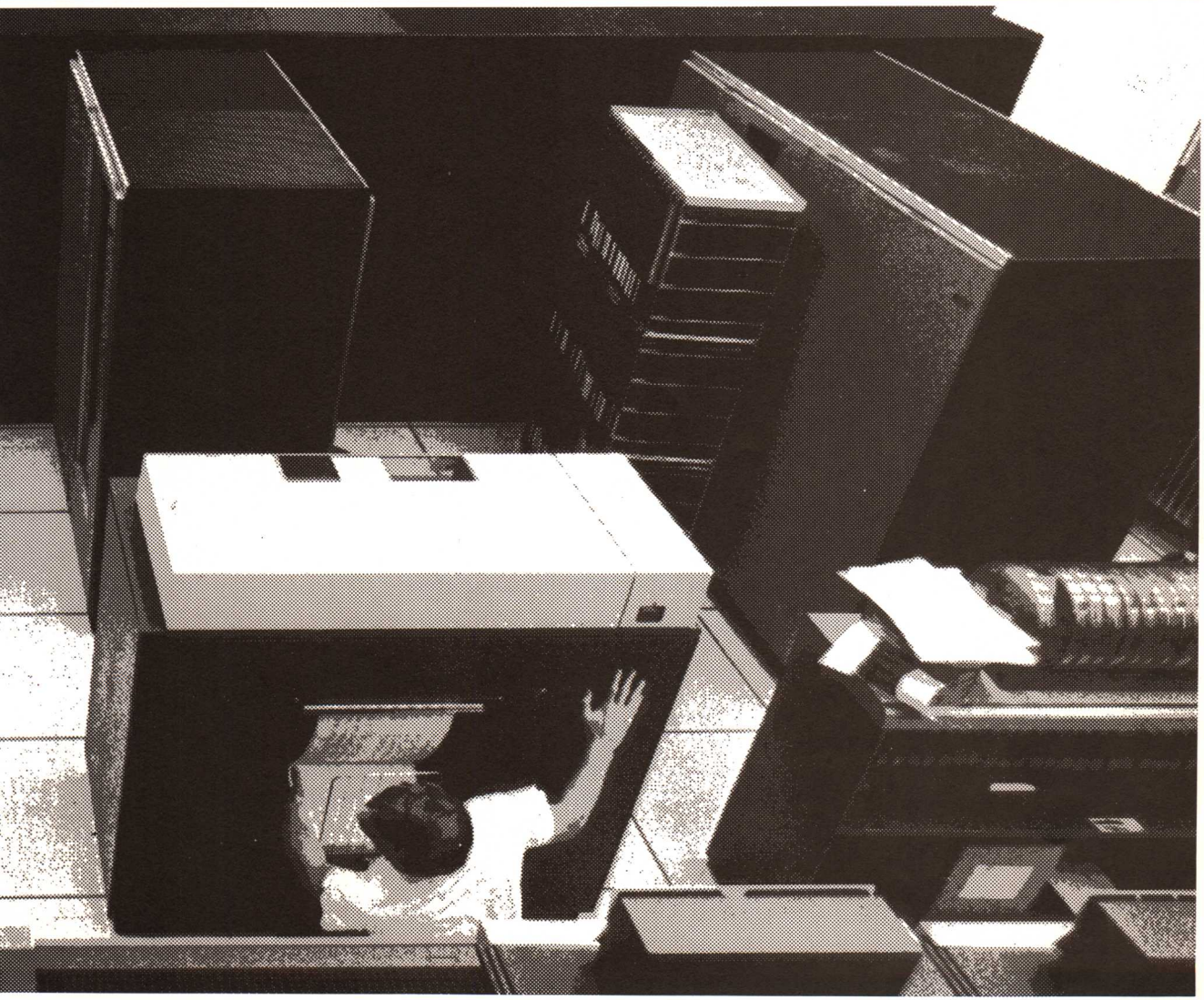
This part is designed to provide a broad insight into the general field of data processing. It includes topics such as the following.

- 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.



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