


From the Software Shelf

PC World offers first impressions of recent software releases

This month: Ventura updates a winner, Dartmouth returns to basics, Borland solves your equations, the Cadillac of sort utilities brings order to large files, and a build-your-own-typeface program makes headlines

Edited by William Rodarmor



Xerox Ventura Publisher

Desktop publishing program

Pros: Professional-grade typographic capabilities; what-you-see page makeup; powerful style sheet formatting

Cons: No undo or help capabilities; can't stretch or rotate text

Version 1.1

Xerox Corp.

101 Continental Blvd.

El Segundo, CA 90245

800/822-8221

List price: \$895

Requirements: 512K (640K recommended); hard disk; Microsoft bus mouse or serial mouse, Mouse Systems PC Mouse, or Xerox optical mouse; graphics board

Not copy protected

How do you improve a program that has already drawn rave reviews? In the case of *Xerox Ventura Publisher*, you keep the program's structure pretty much the same, add features, and plug the holes you missed the first time around.

Ventura's new version 1.1 offers improved typographics, support for more text and graphics standards, better graphics handling, and support for more fonts and laser printers. But Xerox missed a few potholes. *Ventura 1.1* can't stretch or rotate text, lacks a mail merge capability, and won't print

out all the settings in a style sheet. Moreover, this somewhat daunting multimode program still doesn't offer on-line help or an undo command (see "Ventura: Complete Desktop Publishing," *PCW*, March 1987).

The modus operandi of creating a publication with *Ventura* is unchanged. But start the program and open up a document on screen, and you'll notice a pair of *PageMaker*-like sliding markers on the ruler bars that track the movement of the cursor. Those guides only hint at the scores of new features that are hidden from view in *Ventura 1.1*'s pulldown menus.

Xerox has vastly expanded *Ventura*'s typographic controls. Version 1.1 boasts a variety of fixed spaces, optional letterspacing, tracking, and programmable tab characters (see Screen 1). It raises the spaceband controls from two to three, adds automatic kerning, and flags loose lines.

Ventura 1.1 also offers a host of less flashy but equally useful enhancements. It provides frame anchors, which keep graphics in a specified position relative to the text (if the text is reformatted, the program automatically moves the frames). And if you add a new monitor or mouse, you no longer have to reinstall the entire program.

Power users will be happy to learn that *Ventura* can now handle even heftier text files and larger style sheets than before: 500K of text and 128 formatting tags per chapter, compared to the previous limit of about 100K for text and 64 tags.

To *Ventura 1.0*'s already considerable list of word processing formats, Xerox has added *WordStar*,

MultiMate, *Microsoft Word*, *Xerox Writer*, *WordPerfect*, *XyWrite*, and IBM's Document Content Architecture (used by *DisplayWrite* and *Samna*).

The list of acceptable graphics formats has also swelled dramatically. Version 1.1 allows you to import pictures in 9 different object-oriented graphics formats and 3 bit-mapped graphics formats. Together, these 12 formats provide a gateway for output from hundreds of graphics packages, such as *Video Show*, *Freelance*, *Computer-graphics CGM*, *HPGL*—graphics programs that work with *Windows*—plus *MacPaint* and *MacDraw*. Via the latter two, the Macintosh's extensive clip-art libraries are now easily accessible on the PC. And version 1.1 accepts Encapsulated PostScript files, so you can print the output of Ado-

be's *Illustrator* program with true PostScript curves.

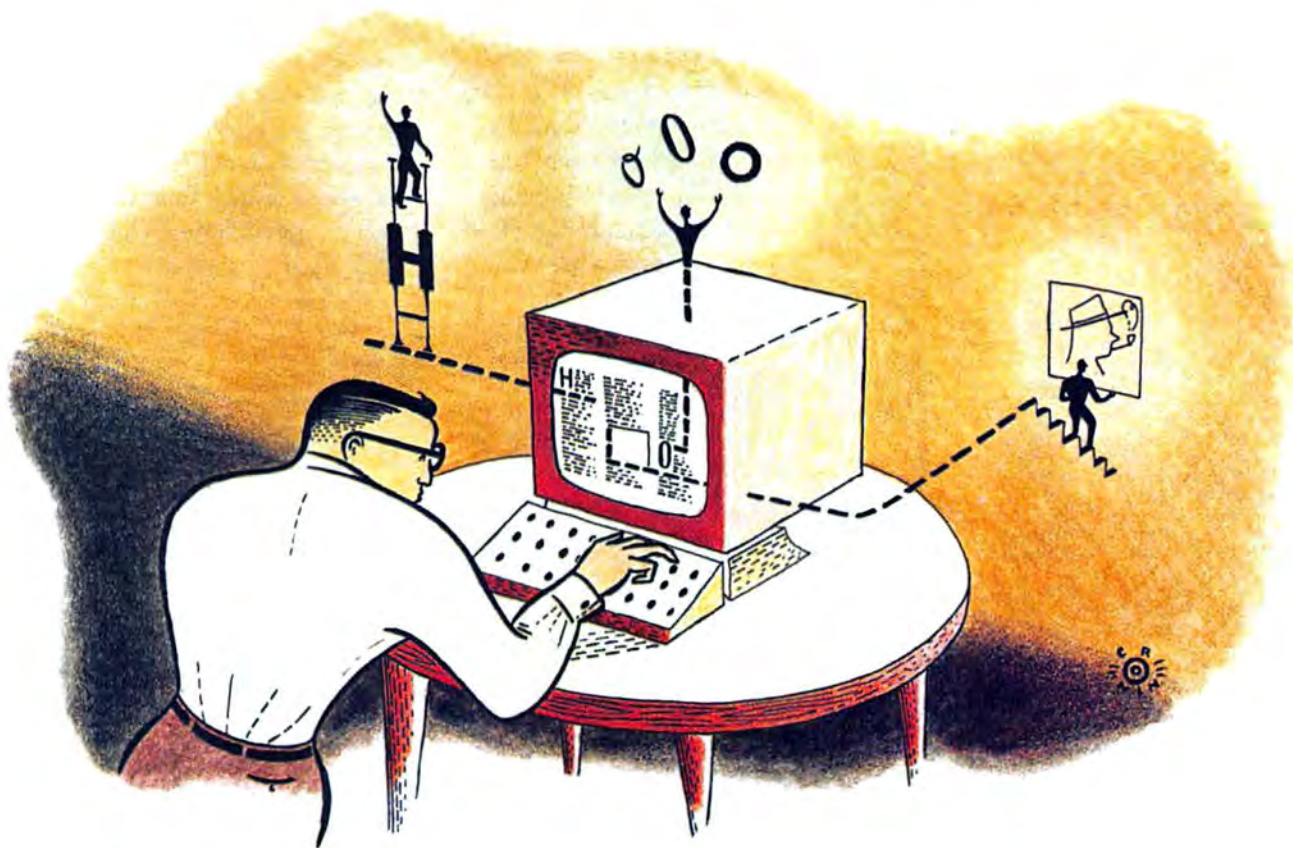
Ventura's ability to manipulate graphics has also been significantly improved. With version 1.0, you could crop only bit-mapped graphics. Now you can crop object graphics generated by any program, from 1-2-3 to *MacPaint*.

Many desktop publishing programs work only with costly PostScript printers or add LaserJet support as an afterthought. But *Ventura*'s laser ambitions are apparently unquenchable. The new program supports all PostScript- and LaserJet Plus-compatible printers and adds drivers for the Cordata and Interpress laser printers. Moreover, the PostScript and J Laser drivers are noticeably faster.

The new release also opens the door to more third-party fonts and streamlines the process of converting them. You can now transform fonts in LaserJet format for use with the AST TurboLaser, the J Laser board, the Xerox 4045, and the Cordata. If a font developer includes the necessary files, you can convert the fonts from *Ventura*'s menus. If not, you'll have to exit *Ventura* and go through a multiple-step process using utilities provided with the program.

The list of improvements continues: automatic shingling of 11-by-17-inch pages, support for a host of large-screen monitors, an adjustable zero point on the ruler (handy when working within a box), and enhanced automatic numbering.

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NEW RELEASES/UPDATES

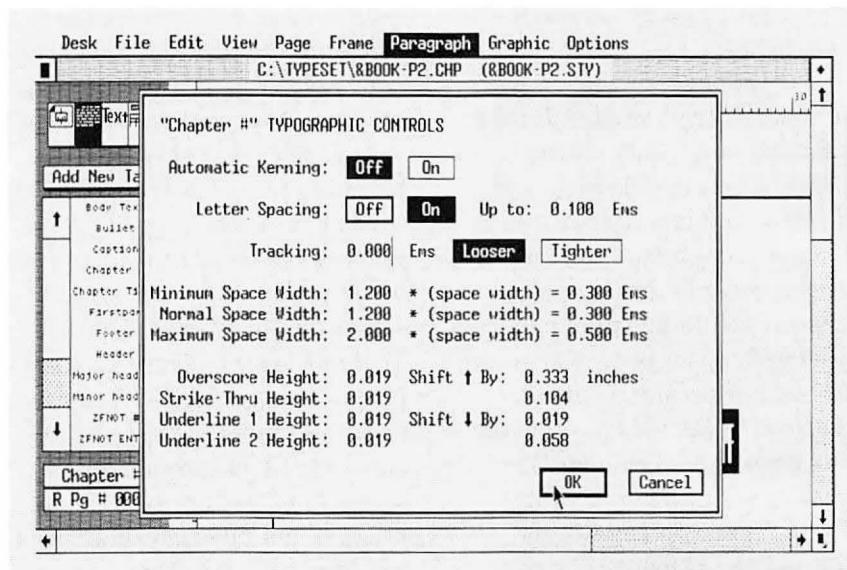
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From the Software Shelf



Screen 1: Ventura Publisher's new typographic controls include automatic kerning; letterspacing for spaces within words; tracking; and minimum, maximum, and optimal space between words.

Version 1.1 also has a more extensive hyphenation algorithm than the fast but somewhat absentminded one in version 1.0. For the international market, hyphenation algorithms have been added for UK English, French, Italian, and Spanish. And multilingual desktop publishers can use two hyphenation utilities simultaneously, automatically hyphenating adjacent columns of English and French, for instance.

The biggest disappointment of version 1.1 is Xerox's continued refusal to extend users a helping hand. A printed tutorial and some sample preformatted documents are better than nothing, but they aren't much. Not only does Ventura lack context-sensitive help screens, it lacks a help facility, period. And on-screen blunders will cost you: Version 1.1 still doesn't have an undo command. Mastering Ventura is challenging enough,

and the lack of help effectively bars many users from grasping the program's nuances. With version 1.1, Ventura has clearly strengthened its claim as the publishing program of choice for the features and speed crowd, but novices should approach with caution.

—Ted Nace

True BASIC 2.0 BASIC compiler

Pros: Elegant, systematic language; powerful arithmetic and graphics capabilities

Cons: Not compatible with IBM BASIC; produces large .EXE files; expensive developer license

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