

HESWRITER

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Although HesWriter was one of the first "serious" word processors for the VIC 20, it suffers by comparison with more recent software in the same field, notably Quick Brown Fox and Write Now! Still, HesWriter has occupied a high position on some "top ten" lists of VIC software, and as such deserves comment.

Two important features to look for with a word processor are the ability to access text and the ability to manipulate this text easily. In both these areas, HesWriter is disappointing.

The maximum length of a HesWriter line is 18 characters. There is word wrap, which moves words which won't fit at the end of one line, unbroken, to the beginning of the next line. Copy is entered a line at a time, and it is not possible to edit lines above the one you are currently working on. In order to make changes to text above the "cursor line", you have to enter the Edit Mode, where alterations can be made only with some difficulty.

For example, if you want to insert a lot of material in the middle of a previously typed line, you have to first determine the number of this line by entering the Number Mode, somehow retaining the number (how? with a pencil?), then create the new text elsewhere, insert it *before* the line in which you want to insert it, and then delete any extraneous words. If this sounds confusing, believe me, it is. Furthermore, when inserts and edits are made in this way, extra spaces are sometimes created which are printed out along with the text. It's also possible to find yourself in editing situations where copy is frozen and nothing further can be inserted without going through variants on the above procedure. Deleting lines or copying lines from one location to another are both handled in a similar manner, and returning to the main Entry Mode sometimes leaves you with no copy on screen to refer to.

HesWriter *does* work quite well with fairly simple projects which don't

require any fancy formatting. It is also well suited to slow, careful typists. I found that when typing fast, the cursor had trouble keeping up to me. This proved annoying when the cursor dropped to the line below, revealing "hidden" errors at the end of the one above (which, of course, couldn't be corrected except by going through the odious business above).

HesWriter is also best suited to use with low-cost printers like the VIC-1525, since it has no provision to use features like italics, condensed print, superscript, and so forth. In fact, it won't even access the expanded print on the VIC printer, created with CHR\$(14)! I found printing with HesWriter proceeded at a slow but acceptable pace highly reminiscent of some BASIC word processors, a similarity which was enforced by BASIC error messages in other parts of the program.

There are various format commands in HesWriter designed to determine the four margins of the printed page, spaces between lines, position of headers (titles), and the use of centred or justified copy (the latter with aligned margins). Not all of these worked with my Gemini-10 printer and Cardco interface combination and I couldn't determine if this was because of the printer or because I wasn't using acceptable values in these commands. There are usually no minimum values established in the manual. A value of "0" for the left margin produced erratic results in printout, for example.

HesWriter saves to tape or disk and allows you to change screen and lettering colors. You can also preview text before it is sent to the printer and chain files together to make long documents. There is a "search" mode, which does not work very well — some instances of a given sequence were bypassed. Among the things you can *not* do is access the disk directory or other functions like Scratch and Validate.

The shifted space in HesWriter (CHR\$(160)), which is used as a "fixed space", causes problems with non-Commodore printers where this is a

printing graphic character. With my Gemini 10, I had to adjust one of the dip switches on the back to clear this up. As well, HesWriter places a double space after each sentence when printing out. This is the procedure we were all taught to do in high school typing class, but it may not always be desirable, and it is not possible to disable this feature.

HesWriter is a world unto itself as far as compatibility with other word processors is concerned. It saves programs on disk as sequential files, which means it's not possible to load in material from most major word processors, which save to disk with program files. Even loading from Totl.Text, which also saves sequentially, proved fruitless, since its files are created by a different method. Tape files were also incompatible.

In short, at a price roughly equivalent to that of Cardco's Write Now!, which offers many more features and considerable versatility in manipulating copy, HesWriter does not have a great deal to offer. One would hope, in fact, that HesWare would issue a revised version of HesWriter for the VIC 20 incorporating features such as found in more recent word processors and which was the equal of their high-quality games and other products. TPUG

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**The TPUG BBS has a new
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(416) 429-6044.

The new operating hours are. . .

24 hours per day.

7 days per week.

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