Like wot I **wrote…**

WP packages are becoming bloated with relatively useless gizmos of one kind or another. But features like AutoText and AutoCorrect can really improve your finished work, says Tim Phillips. Here is his guide to getting the best from the rest, and there are some top tips, too.

At the moment, I'm preoccupied with wondering whether anyone is going to enjoy the idea of abandoning a word processor for something a little more manageable. It's the scenario envisaged by Oracle and others as a response to Microsoft's runaway domination of the applications market.

This isn't an either/or decision for most users. If you work at home, then yes, you will probably need the belt and braces solution of Microsoft Office for personal productivity. If, however, you work in the office then the word processor will, I believe, become a presentation tool, with all its formatting and functionality used for that. For communicating using text, the modern word processor is vastly over-specified, and the stream of queries I receive from users with quite basic problems must be a symptom that something is wrong.

Diagnosis: Featuritis

One problem is that this industry rarely solves anything without adding another feature, when the real problem is to do with using the existing features. Extremely useful additions like AutoCorrect and AutoText get buried half way down a middle menu: I use a word processor all the time and can't find them.

What a relief it would be for me to find an application that would enable me to use features only as I needed them — basic text, a word count, spellchecker, cut and
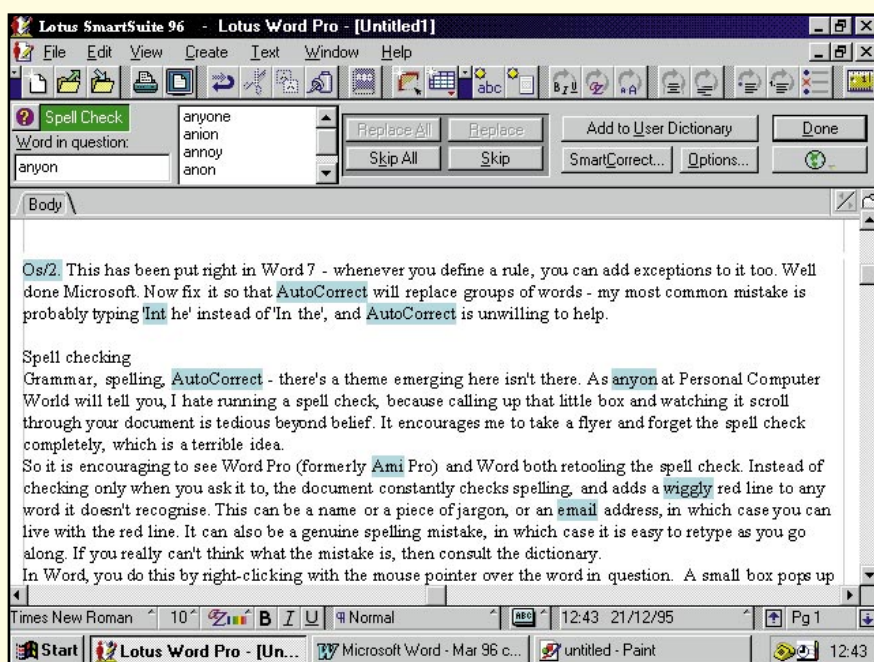
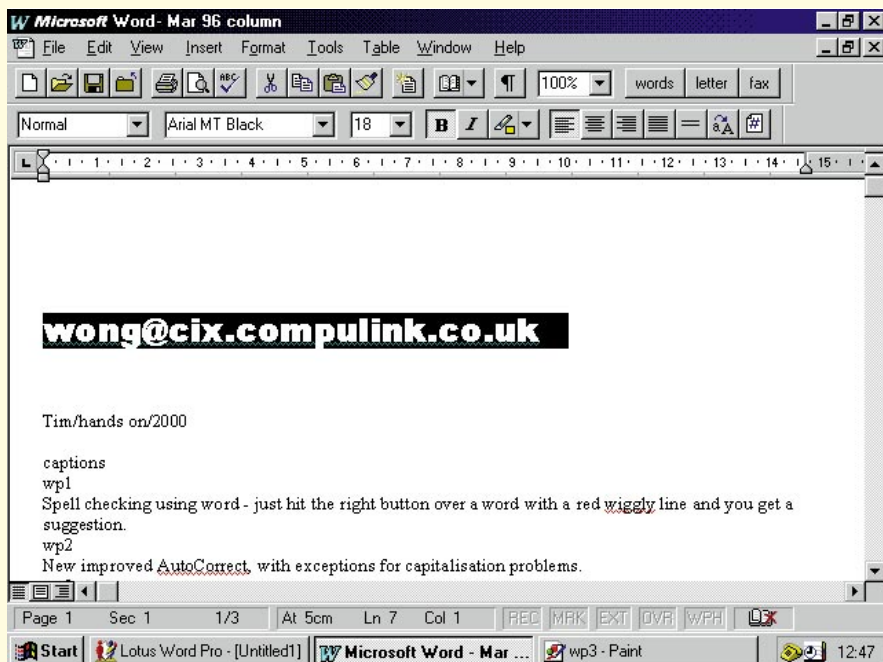paste — and know that I can get more *when I need it*, instead of having to install 47Mb of Word Pro.

This is the model for both the "network computer" model, and the grand plan of bite-sized modular software conceived by the OpenDoc consortium. Unfortunately, OpenDoc is looking rather lame now that Novell has backed out of applications, and IBM and Apple have other problems to fix first. I hope the rest of my career writing about word processors isn't going to be a constant reminder of new features in increasingly bloated software, and for this reason as much as any other, I'm all for slim applications which aren't stored on a massive local hard disk.

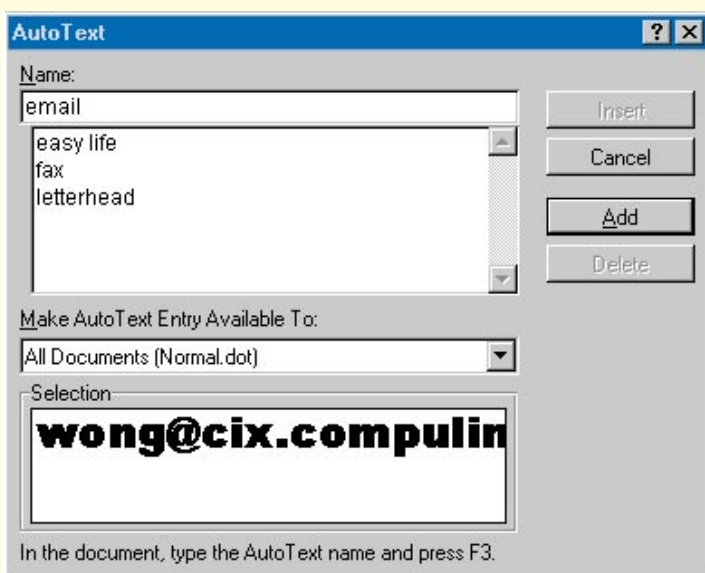### Grammar, schlammer…

Grammar checkers are a classic symptom

Spellchecking in Word Pro avoids the nasty dialogue-box idea in favour of a more elegant solution

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Tim/hands on/2000

captions
wp1
Spell checking using word - just hit the right button over a word with a red wiggly line and you get a suggestion.
wp2
New improved AutoCorrect, with exceptions for capitalisation problems.

Above
AutoText is easy, when you know how. First highlight the text...

Right
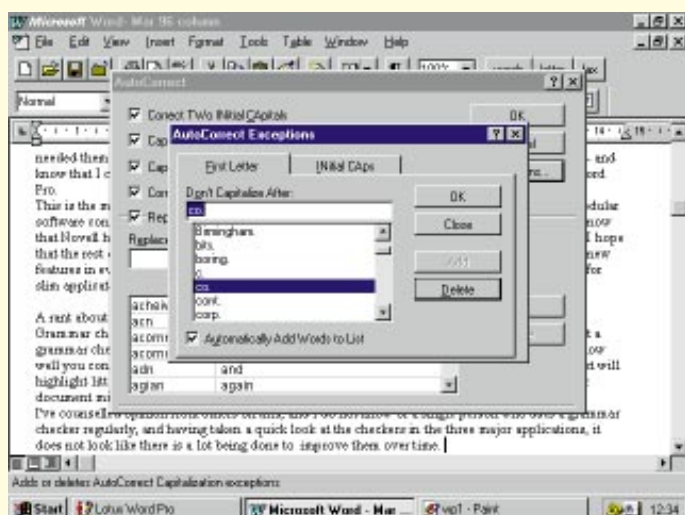*...then bring up the AutoText dialogue box and name it*

Patching things up

This is not as bad as forgetting that Ctrl-Tab exists, as I did recently (you can stop mailing me to complain about that now), but a bug with my DEBUG routine to make a patch for EDIT was spotted by Walter Blanchard: *"Somebody has probably already told you but the patch for EDIT you gave in the October issue doesn't quite work the way you gave it; at least, not on my machines. Simple-minded folk like me who don't use DEBUG that often might like to know a small correction.*

"I found the correct sequence to be…

```
-r ds
DS 0A57  (in my case)
:        (the problem is that if you type in the 2a57...etc at this colon it
         simply comes up with ERROR, so you have to press enter again)
-e 2a57:dd70"*.*",0
-w
WRITING 2F705 BYTES
-q
```

…and it works."

New improved AutoCorrect, with exceptions for capitalisation problems

A note about AutoCorrect

It's roughly a year since I first raved about AutoCorrect and I can't tell you how many keystrokes it has saved me since. For those of you who are new to the concept, it's like the aforementioned AutoText but serves to correct common mistakes.

If, like me, you regularly type "yuo" instead of "you", you can have this automatically corrected by Word as you go along. WordPerfect users have a similar luxury. This makes you into a terrible typist but shortens the dreaded spellchecker enormously.

When I reviewed the Word 6 AutoCorrect, I complained that it was sometimes difficult not to have

of featuritis; who actually needs one of these 5Mb wastes of disk space, anyway?

No matter how well you configure a grammar checker, its limited pattern-recognition way of looking at your text will highlight little more of use than a few clichés and long sentences. A careful read through your document would be more effective.

I don't know of a single person who uses a grammar checker regularly. Having taken a quick look at the checkers in the three major applications, it doesn't look like there is a lot being done to improve them over time. If the trend were not towards selling monolithic applications, then we could sell grammar checkers as add-ons, tailored to fit closely to word processors. My advice: skip them, and save some precious disk space.

Word for Windows and AutoText

Everyone has lines, pages or even layouts that need constant re-doing, and the well-hidden AutoText feature in Word for Windows falls into the "extremely useful but under-used" category which solves this particular problem.

Getting started on AutoText couldn't be simpler. Just type some dull and repetitive text (if you're thinking "he means this column", I'll be round to knock you about a bit), highlight it and select AutoText from the bottom of the Edit menu. Up pops a dialogue box to show what you have selected and picks the beginning of the selection as a suggested name. You either accept this (it doesn't have to be one word, it can be a phrase) or pick your own name, then select Add for it to become an AutoText entry.

When you next need this text, simply type its AutoText name, hit F3, and up pops the text. It's very quick, too, which can't be said for all the features in Word for Windows, and has a variety of uses.

Tim's Macro Club

A thin entry this month, so I'm expecting better from you in the future —*don't forget, there are prizes on offer*. Thanks for the positive feedback, though; it seems a lot of you are using the macros we print.

As a treat, I'm publishing a three-part macro for automatic scrolling in Word. It's a simple solution, and I quite enjoyed it. I also like it because it comes from Belgium where I recently spent a pleasant weekend. If ever word processors get too frustrating, I recommend a stroll round Bruges to take the pressure off.

"The purpose of the following macros is to scroll the current document in the WinWord window automatically," says V Debroey, of Landen. *"This allows you to read it 'hands-off', without having to hit the down arrow or click in the scrollbar."*

The first macro turns on this "auto-scrolling":

```
——-begin macro "Scroll"
Sub MAIN
  Print "AutoScroll On"
  if IsMacro() = O then LineDown 2
  OnTime Now() + 0.00002, "Scroll"
End Sub
——-end macro "Scroll"
```

It moves the cursor down two lines, then uses the "OnTime" command to call itself after about two seconds, thus eventually moving down to the end of the file.

To adjust this macro to your reading speed, you can experiment with the numbers after LineDown and OnTime (the fraction in OnTime is a fraction of a day's length).
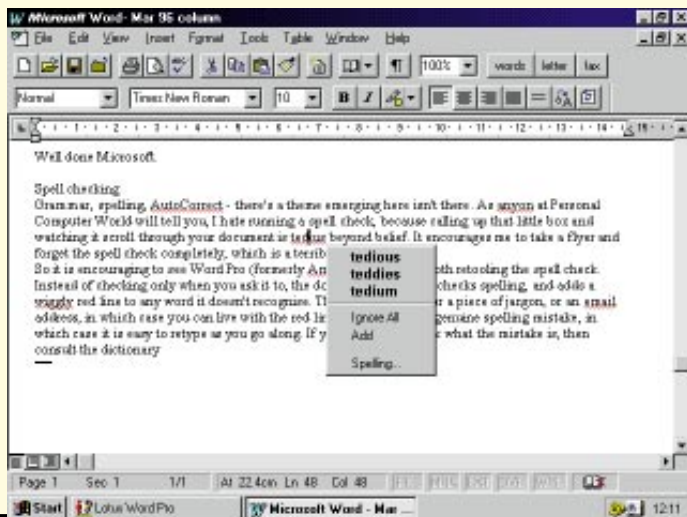
You need another macro to stop auto-scrolling:

```
——-begin macro "ScrollStop"
Sub MAIN
  Print "AutoScroll Off"
  OnTime Now(), "StopScrolling"
End Sub
——end macro "ScrollStop"
```

This macro calls a third macro, "StopScrolling", in its OnTime command. The StopScrolling macro doesn't do anything; it's just there as a target for OnTime:

```
——begin macro "StopScrolling"
Sub MAIN
  'nothing here, really
End Sub
——end macro "StopScrolling"
```

Assign the first two macros to a hot key; Load a (lengthy) document, and hit the hot key for "Scroll"; sit back and read. All normal Word commands are still available, but I don't recommend editing the file while the cursor is moving all the time: hit the hot key for "ScrollStop" to halt the process. Unfortunately this doesn't work in Word 2 — other versions, anyone?

Spellchecking using Word — just hit the right button over a word with a red wiggly line and you get a suggestion

contradictory rules. While I often make the mistake of typing two capital letters at the beginning of a sentence and would like to AutoCorrect this, I don't want to have it constantly correcting "OS/2" to "Os/2". This has been put right in Word 7; so whenever you define a rule, you can add exceptions to it as well. Well done, Microsoft. Now fix it so that AutoCorrect will replace groups of words — my most common mistake is typing "Int he" instead of "In the", and AutoCorrect is unwilling to help.

Spellchecking

As the sub-editors at *PCW* will tell you, I hate running a spellcheck, because calling up that little box and watching it scroll through your document is tedious beyond belief. It encourages me to take a flyer and forget the spellchecker completely, which is a terrible idea.

So it is encouraging to see Word Pro (formerly Ami Pro) and Word both retooling the spellchecker. Instead of checking only when you ask it to, the document constantly checks spelling, adding a wiggly red line to any word it doesn't recognise. This can be a name, a piece of jargon or an email address, in which case you can live with the red line. It can also be a genuine spelling mistake, in which case it is easy to retype as you go along.

If you really can't think what the mistake is, then consult the dictionary. In Word, you do this by right clicking with the mouse pointer over the word in question. A small box pops up with the best alternatives and

Six tips for AutoText

● Pick a name that's easy to remember and don't bother with unusual capitalisation. For example, "address" is easier to get right than "TimHomeAddress for letter". When you type "address" in a document, it won't select the AutoText replacement unless you hit F3 immediately afterwards.
● Use it for formatted text too; I have a letterhead which I have as an AutoText entry.
● Attach useful AutoText entries to the toolbar. You do this by selecting Customise, Toolbars and scrolling down to the bottom of the list. There you find AutoText, and the dialogue pops up with your list of entries, any one of which you can drag to the toolbar.
● Fields can be nested in AutoText. So for generating letters, include today's date below your home address as one AutoText entry — it will not only fill in the address, but add the date as well.
● I'm not a great fan of developing hundreds of templates for personal use, so I have a fax cover AutoText too.
● AutoText can be added retrospectively. If you develop an outline, use AutoText names for standard text items. When the outline is finished, highlight the item, hit F3 and develop it quickly.

an option to go to the full spellchecker window if they don't work — very quick and simple.

Similarly, Lotus blocks all the words it doesn't recognise in blue text, but waits for you to call up the spellchecker. Many people find this less intrusive but I prefer the Microsoft way. Lotus doesn't use the right mouse button but it is still a quick and neat spellchecker and a big improvement on the orthodox method. I'd recommend either package on this basis.

PCW Contacts

And that's that for this month. Surface or airmail to *PCW*, otherwise I'm on email at **wong@cix.compulink.co.uk** and **CompuServe 100436,3616**