

MacProof 3.2.1, Lexpertise USA (Desk Accessory)

by Lea Bromley

Proofreading is difficult and tedious, especially when it's your own work. The eyes have a tendency to see what we think should be there and not what is actually there. So I was delighted to have the opportunity to review a program that purports to take over that chore.

MacProof is a desk accessory that is awkward to install. It takes several steps rather than a simple "drag to the hard disk," but for the most part, it is easy to use. The documentation was more detailed than is common with Macintosh programs.

The text of a document is selected then MacProof loads it to the Clipboard for review. The Clipboard hides formatting and type fonts and examines only the text. Choosing "Select Checks" from the pulldown menu provides a dialog box where the user can customize the number and kind of checks to run. These can be set up as defaults or customized for each new document.

MacProof checks for mechanical errors such as spelling, capitalization, double words, and punctuation (including irregular spacing). Visually, it is like a standard spelling checker. It stops and highlights each anomaly it finds then provides suggestions as to the correct spelling or makes pithy remarks as to the nature of the detected error. "A complete sentence ends with a period." (Really?!)

The DA uses a 80,000 word spelling dictionary (Merriam/Webster) a supplementary spelling dictionary and a usage dictionary. Both of the last two can be modified to suit your style of writing, terminology, and vocabulary from either the dialog box in the Run Checks mode or a pull down menu.

MacProof also looks at more complex matters such as "Usage". This covers such things as "Often Confused" (e.g., their, there, your, you're, accept, except), Formality (too casual or too stilted), Imprecise ("stuff" the noun meaning "things"), Wordy ("at this point in time" means "now"), Nonstandard, ("anyways"), and User-Defined (you build this category yourself), (you won't believe how many times it stopped in this last paragraph), and Offensive.

"MacProof flags words that may offend some readers. These words include negative references to racial, sexual, and religious groups as well as vulgar and obscene language."

I won't even attempt to provide any examples.

Style Checks include reviewing the "be" verbs and nominalizations (verbs that have been made into nouns usually by adding the suffixes *tion*, *ance*, *ence*, or *ing*).

If you notice editing changes you wish to make, even though they have not been highlighted by MacProof, these changes can be made, but the directions for doing this are confusing and a bit frustrating. I never was able to make it work exactly the way I wanted.

A second pull-down menu is entitled "Analyze Structure." Selecting this brings up a dialog box from which the features are used one at a time. These are Sentence List (sentences listed separately), Paragraph Structure (starting and ending sentences of paragraphs are reviewed for validity), Repetitions (number of occurrences of a word or phrase within highlighted text), Sentence Beginnings, Document Structure, and Counts and Averages. All very useful when such an in-depth review is critical, for example when preparing an academic paper or material for publication. There was a warning about format compatibility. **"MacProof will damage format codes when used with all versions of Microsoft Words before version 4.0..."** It is format compatible with

PageMaker 3.0, MacWrite 4.6, 5.0 and II, MindWrite 1.0 and 2.0. I used it with my new PageMaker 4.0 and had no difficulties. However, there are a bunch of Microsoft Word users out there with pre-4.0 versions so this incompatibility is unfortunate. A work-around was suggested. Print out a copy of the document to be reviewed, save one copy to a new document for editing while you mark the changes on the printout, then go back and make the changes. Yuk!!!

If you have plowed through all of this, congratulations...I'll release you from your pain and summarize. I was pleased with some of the features such as checking capitalization, punctuation, and word usage such as checking for homonyms. I probably would not use the more

complex features. Although I'm sure an English teacher would love them. Overall I would rate this program "good."