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For Release 1:30 p.m. PST
November 16, 1992

Microsoft Ships the New Microsoft Access

Relational Database Management System for Microsoft Windows

Microsoft Access Defines a New Standard for Usability and Access to Data

LAS VEGAS – Nov. 16, 1992 – Microsoft Corporation announced today at the COMDEX/Fall '92 conference immediate availability of its long-awaited database management system (DBMS), called Microsoft Access™. Designed to empower interactive users and developers alike, the new, full-featured and fully relational DBMS provides easy, transparent access to data; powerful, usability-tested tools; and a robust development environment.

"We've spent a great deal of time over the last six years listening to our customers and to the database community," said Bill Gates, chairman and CEO at Microsoft. "We created Microsoft Access in response to their requests for a usable database that respects their investment in data.

"By taking our experience in designing great applications for the Windows operating system and applying it to solving the problems of the database world," Gates continued, "we have created a product that will change the way people think about databases. With Microsoft Access, users no longer have to choose between ease of use and power; developers and everyday users alike now have access to the full power of a relational database."

Microsoft Access database is designed to take full advantage of the Microsoft® Windows operating system. Direct manipulation is fully supported: users can simply drag and drop to create data-entry forms or complex reports. A dynamic toolbar changes functions and icons as appropriate to the task at hand, making the most useful tools available at all times. Furthermore, users can create and edit richer, more informative databases easily with the built-in object linking and embedding (OLE) capability. This ability allows users to insert into databases fully editable, bit mapped images, sounds, video clips, Microsoft Word for Windows documents or other binary objects created by OLE servers.

Microsoft Access includes the following key components: a forms package, report writer,

query tool, macro tool, integrated charting package, comprehensive development environment and a multiuser relational database engine.

Data Access Preserves User's Investment in Data

"Users and corporations have large investments in existing data," said Charles Stevens, general manager for database products at Microsoft. "It was imperative that we build a database that could operate directly against existing data through an open interface, making it easy for end users to access that data and for MIS and developers to control and manage the way they get at the data."

Microsoft Access reads and updates local and remote data and indexes by directly attaching to dBASE III® and dBASE III PLUS®, dBASE IV®, Paradox® 3.0 and 3.5, and Btrieve® formats, as well as data from Microsoft SQL Server through Open Database Connectivity (ODBC) technology, with connectivity to ORACLE7 soon to follow. This capability allows users with different products within a workgroup or corporation to share data easily, both on individual workstations, across a network or in a client-server configuration.

In addition to directly attaching to data files, Microsoft Access imports data to and exports from Microsoft FoxPro® database, Microsoft Excel, Lotus® 1-2-3, and fixed-length and delimited ASCII formats. Additional ODBC drivers for directly attaching to Microsoft FoxPro, Sybase SQL Server, DEC® Rdb and other databases are scheduled to be available in 1993.

Usability Is a Key Design Goal

Microsoft Access has undergone more than 700 hours of usability testing, much of it in The Usability Laboratory at Microsoft. This state-of-the-art facility allowed designers to study how people work with databases to help ensure that Microsoft Access would make their jobs easier. For instance, the query tool in Microsoft Access was developed by working with users in the lab. With graphical query by example (GQBE), users can utilize a mouse to drag and drop tables, join fields and specify criteria, enabling them to create complex queries visually rather than having to memorize complicated syntax.

Users can build forms, reports and graphs in minutes with FormWizards, Report Wizards and GraphWizards. Wizards ask questions about format, content and style and then automatically create the form, report or graph according to the user's specifications. The most frequently used types of forms, reports and graphs are supported, such as single-column, tabular and
main-subform for forms, as well as single-column, groups/totals and mailing labels for reports. Furthermore, because Wizards are written in Access Basic code with an open architecture, developers can create their own custom Wizards.

Finally, to help users learn and use the product, Microsoft Access offers an innovative new teaching aid called Cue Cards. The first software product to contain this new technology, Microsoft Access provides task-sensitive instructions on the screen while users work with their own data. Cue Cards contain brief explanations, step-by-step instructions and self-running demonstrations on how to complete tasks. In addition, the context-sensitive Help in Microsoft Access contains more than 2,000 topics ranging from simple definitions to the full text of the *Access Basic* Language Reference.

Powerful Tools Empower Users and Developers

The graphical tools in the Microsoft Access database empower users to complete complicated database tasks without programming. These tools can reduce applications backlog within MIS because users can now perform many database tasks that traditionally have required the expertise of a full-time database programmer.

Using visual form-generation tools, users can create complex, custom forms. With the ability of Windows to support graphics and bit map images, forms can resemble their paper counterparts. Users simply drag and drop fields and then specify fonts and colors. They can design forms with list boxes, option groups, buttons, picture boxes and text. Furthermore, form filters allow users to sort and limit data while using a form − no temporary tables are necessary.

Complex reports are created easily with the banded report writer of Microsoft Access. The fully programmable report writer features a simple user interface, yet it supports two-pass reporting and complex formatting like snaking columns.

Both forms and reports allow the embedding of objects such as charts, documents or even other forms and reports.

Macros help users automate routine DBMS tasks, such as printing out a series of monthly reports, without programming. They provide an easy, fill-in-the-blank programming model with a list of actions displayed in the upper part of the Macro window and the arguments for a selected action in the lower part. Actions and action argument values are displayed in drop-down lists, so users don't need to memorize complex syntax to write a macro.

"With Microsoft Access, MIS departments can get out from under the burden of designing hundreds of custom data-entry forms and reports," said Mary Engstrom, group product manager, Microsoft Access at Microsoft. "Now users can have the power of corporate data in their own hands."

Microsoft Access Offers A Robust Environment for Serious Database Development

Microsoft Access contains its own state-of-the-art database engine. This data storage facility contains full support for referential integrity, transactions, nulls and fully updatable views across multiple tables and formats.

Although most routine tasks can be automated without coding, Microsoft Access offers a robust development environment with a full-featured programming language to enable quick, productive application development.

Users can write sophisticated database applications using Access Basic – a powerful, extensible, structured programming language. Based on the language in the award-winning Microsoft Visual Basic™ programming system, Access Basic adds enhancements such as database objects and optional explicit variable declarations. For additional power, Access Basic can call routines in any Windows dynamic link library (DLL).

With a Windows-based integrated development environment (IDE), Microsoft Access provides multiple windows for code editing and debugging, as well as a debugging window for testing procedures, variables and expressions. The full set of debugging tools enables users to set breakpoints and single-step-by-step procedures and user-defined functions.

With the addition of the Microsoft Access Developer Kit (scheduled to be available separately in the first quarter of 1993), developers can create stand alone applications and distribute them royalty-free.

High-end Database Companies Speak Out on Microsoft Access

"Sybase and Microsoft have worked together to deliver superior database technology for client-server computing for more than five years," said Dr. Robert Epstein, executive vice president, Sybase, Inc. "Microsoft Access, as a database front end, will fully complement the high-performance functionality of SQL Server, available from Sybase and Microsoft. We have worked extensively with Microsoft to ensure that Microsoft Access is fully optimized to work with SQL Server."

"Microsoft and Oracle have been working jointly in the database area for some time, specifically, on the design of ODBC and the testing of the ODBC driver for ORACLE, and on a full 32-bit, high-performance port of ORACLE7 for Windows NT," said Lawrence J. Ellison, president and chief executive officer, Oracle Corporation. "Microsoft Access, through the ODBC driver for ORACLE, will provide Oracle users a powerful tool for accessing Oracle data."

"As announced today, Digital is happy to be extending its relationship with Microsoft by agreeing to resell Microsoft Access as our Windows-based database front end to DEC Rdb and by porting Rdb to the Microsoft Windows NT operating system," said Chuck Rozwat, database manager at Digital. "Microsoft Access provides the end user and development tools to take full advantage of the DEC Rdb strategic relational database."

Pricing, Availability and System Requirements

After getting extensive feedback from developers, corporate customers and resellers that database pricing is confusing and difficult to implement, Microsoft is simplifying database pricing and product configurations by offering Microsoft Access and Microsoft FoxPro version

2.5 for a suggested retail price of $495 for the first user and additional users at $425 each. Microsoft FoxPro 2.5 and Microsoft Access have full multiuser capability right out of the box, so customers do not have to buy LAN packs or upgrades. This pricing and configuration, which is consistent with other application categories like word processing and spreadsheets, makes purchasing easy to understand and manage for end users, as well as developers and MIS managers who distribute and install databases. The Microsoft Access Developer Kit, available in the first quarter of 1993, will carry a suggested retail price of $495.

Microsoft Access is available today. In addition to the English language version, Microsoft Access is available immediately in French, German and Portuguese. Italian, Spanish and Swedish versions are scheduled to ship by the end of 1992.

In order to promote evaluation of its new database for Windows, Microsoft also will be offering special introductory pricing for Microsoft Access. Designed to make it easy and inexpensive for users to evaluate the new database, Microsoft Access will be available for a suggested retail price of only $99. The offer expires on January 31, 1993.

To run Microsoft Access, users need the Microsoft Windows graphical environment version 3.0 or higher, an 80386SX or higher microprocessor, 4MB of RAM (2MB minimum), 8MB of free hard disk space (14MB for a full installation of all drivers, sample databases and online help), an EGA or higher-resolution monitor, and a Microsoft Mouse or compatible pointing device. Microsoft Access supports all Windows-compatible networks including Microsoft Windows™ for Workgroups, Microsoft LAN Manager, Novell® NetWare® and Banyan® VINES®.

Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ MSFT) is the worldwide leader in software for personal computers. The company offers a wide range of products and services for business and personal use, each designed with the mission of making it easier and more enjoyable for people to take advantage of the full power of personal computing every day.

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