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opened the box, out fell one 700-page book and three disks; that was it. The in-

QNX. It supports Watcom C and C++, Microsoft C and C++, Visual C, Borland

Susan Ryan is senior analyst for First Look at InfoWorld.

MACINTOSH SOFTWARE SUITE

Mac Office matches Windows — almost

BY CHRISTOPHER HALL AND GARY TEWS
REVIEW BOARD

With Microsoft Office 4.2, Microsoft Corp. has finally standardized on one version, one feature set, and one interface for both Windows and Macintosh. Administrators, trainers, and users will be pleased at the parallel features, identical interface, and nearly transparent integration among the constituent programs, all with only minor differences between Mac and PC.

This is not a wholly rosy picture, however. Only Excel and Word are available as native PowerPC versions, and the Mac products run more slowly than their Windows siblings — even on a 601 PowerPC compared to a 486DX2/66.

Microsoft Office for Mac contains Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and a license for a single Microsoft Mail client. The Windows version also includes Access 2.0, which is not available on the Macintosh. Both Office for Windows and Office for Mac are available on CD — get them this way and avoid the tedious 29-floppy installation.

Both products install Microsoft Office Manager, a utility allowing access to all of the applications from either the active menu bar on the Mac or a palette on the PC. WordBasic, Word's macro language, finally appears for Mac users (although without WordBasic manuals), but Excel loses its macro facility in favor of Visual Basic for Applications (which at least has a users' guide — the command reference is available at an additional cost). The Macintosh version also supports AppleScript.

Microsoft Office does a good job supporting OLE 2.0, Apple's Publish and Subscribe, and the Apple Open Collaboration Environment.

Learning the applications is eased by Microsoft's on-line help, though it omitted support for Apple's excellent AppleGuide help system.

Overall, Microsoft provides a terrific value in Office for Mac. Pricing is \$300 less than what the bundled programs would be separately.

POINTING DEVICE



Let your finger do the pointing with GlidePoint

The Alps GlidePoint won't soon be stealing market share from traditional desktop pointing devices, but it is a great alternative for notebook users. After a few hours of practice I found the GlidePoint fairly predictable and easy to use — much more so than those peanut-sized trackballs that most notebooks are cursed with. Sliding my finger across the pad to reach a selection soon felt like a natural way to point, though the clicking part took some practice. It was especially difficult when I had to select a check box or radio button. The cursor had a tendency to wander when I was tapping, or it wouldn't sense that I had lifted my finger when I was in a hurry. Double-tapping was even more difficult to master, but both were worth the effort. After some practice, I was almost as comfortable using the GlidePoint as I am using a normal mouse. If the GlidePoint were designed as a desktop unit, with a slightly larger pad area and a comfortable stand, I'd chase away my old mouse. If you don't want the customization, the GlidePoint should work with standard mouse drivers. Alps Electric (USA) Inc., in San Jose, Calif., is at (800) 825-2577; fax: (408) 432-8337.

— Edm Hous

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