

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF ZIANE ACHOUR OF DJELFA

Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts,

Department of English

Module: Elearning

Level: Bachelors' 1

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LECTURE TWO: Word Processor Software

Objectives of the lecture

Upon successful completion of the lecture, students shall be able to:

- 1- Define « Word processing »;
- 2- Know about the historical background of word processing;
- 3- Know some advantages and disadvantages of word processor software.

Lecture outline

- 1- Definition of « word processing »;
- 2- Emergence and development of word processor software;
- 3- Cons and pros of word processor software;
- 4- Assessment activity.

Definition of Word processing and Word processor

- A distinctive line needs to be drawn between the two terms *word processing* and *word processor*. Word processing refers to the acts of ***creating, editing, saving and printing*** a text-based document using a word processor.
- A word processor is a device or a program that makes word processing possible. By *device*, it should be meant the processors that physically do the word processing; a good example of this is the typewriter. By *program*, it should be meant the software used in word processing; good examples of this are: WordPerfect, Microsoft word, Google Docs, etc.

Emergence and development of Word processor devices and programs

1- Manual word processors

Discussing the emergence and development of Word processor devices and programs should take us back in history to the Chinese paper-making craftsmen, who should be credited for being the first to start the act of « printing » as we know it today; i.e making multiple copies of a text. This supports the idea that word processing did not develop **out of computer technology, but it did develop from the human needs to automate the physical aspects of writing.**

After the Chinese, Muslims also should be credited for bringing their innovative ideas to this new industry of printing (See Geoffrey Roper: <https://muslimheritage.com/muslim-printing-before-gutenberg/>).

In the 15th century, Johannes Gutenberg, invented the press; an invention that saved humans time and money. Before the press, making a copy of a long text, such as the Bible at the time, the tradition was to hire a scribe for the job. This required much money and time.

In 1867, Christopher Latham Sholes invented the **typewriter**. A word processor **device** that worked mechanically. But, with no editing nor storing features.

2. Electricity-based word processors

In 1872, Thomas Edison introduced the idea of an **electric typewriter**. However, this idea did not come into application until the 1920s.

In mid 1930s, IBM introduced its electric version of electric typewriters. In addition to the idea that electric typewriters could print faster than manual typewriters, they marked a shift from a purely mechanical process of word processing to a combination of both mechanics and electricity.

In 1961, IBM introduced the Selectric typewriter, which replaced the standard movable carriage and individual typestrickers with a revolving typeball. IBM documents this by saying that:

“The IBM Selectric was the most successful electric typewriter in history. With its distinctive type element — a spinning, bobbing mechanism often likened to a golf ball — it improved the productivity of typists and the appearance of their work. It offered multiple fonts and multiple alphabets while paving the way for IBM to enter the business of word processors and personal computers decades later.”

3. Storage devices and editing issues!

In 1964, IBM combined its selectric typewriter (ST) with the magnetic tape (MT) features in an invention called Magnetic Tape Selectric Typewriter (MT/ST). This new device made it possible to save and resave typed information. But, the storage capacity was a real issue as the magnetic tape storage capacity was remarkably low.

In 1973, IBM introduced a special ink formula that enables typists to edit texts using a special sticky tape for deleting typing errors.

The solution to the storage-capacity problems started with the invention of ***floppy disks*** in the beginning of the seventies (1970s). This device allowed the storage of longer texts.

4. Personal Computer (PC) and the emergence of word processor **applications**

The year 1977 should be considered a significantly important year because it was the year when the PC (personal computer) first appeared. It was introduced by Apple. However, four years later (1981) IBM also introduced its first PC; this tells us about the fierce competition between IBM and Apple at the time. The market was thirsty for the devices that would allow work to be done faster. The role then fell to technology companies. The change that the introduction of PCs to the market brought about a revolution that the world started to witness few years later by the introduction of the first word-processing **applications** (such as WordStar, WordPerfect and Microsoft Word).

In the year 1983, Microsoft Word's first edition was introduced.

Now, web-based word processors allowing for instant and wider processing options are available. A good example of these is Google Docs that we shall discuss in the coming lectures.

Cons and pros of word processing programs

Word processing applications allow users to do work faster, and so it is time-saving. They are also cost-effective as they do not require huge amounts of money to « scribes ». Their innovative functions such as grammar checking, formatting choices, etc. allow users to adapt the texts they type according to their target needs.

However, the use of word processing applications brings about reliance that causes handwriting skills to deteriorate. Also, access to a PC and getting it started, and the setting up of a word file may require time; in some cases, pens and papers are easily accessible.

Assessment

- In light of the above, in a Word file, try to divide the development of word processors and word processing programs to different historical phases. Print your work and bring it with you next week. The information needs to be taken from the handout only. Texts that seem to be written based on other sources will be dismissed.