

## Thoughtful look at desktop publishing

*Desktop Publishing Skills* by James Felici and Ted Nace (Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1987, 180 pp., \$19.95)

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Desktop publishing suffers one problem the post-Civil War South did: carpetbaggers. Its possibilities have led PC industry analysts to predict a multibillion-dollar-a-year market by the end of the decade. These speculations have helped fuel a boom in desktop-publishing magazines and consultants — people whose survival depends on promoting the very technology they evaluate and propose to their clients.

I've seen many exaggerated and misleading desktop-publishing claims in the past year. I've seen many folks with little publishing knowledge telling others to buy desktop-publishing equipment. I've begun to see a backlash brewing among publishing professionals who've tried to use the new technology and found it wanting.

So when *Desktop Publishing Skills* came along, I was skeptical. That skep-

ticism was misplaced.

James Felici and Ted Nace's book is the best thing I've seen — article, magazine, book, or conference presentation — on the topic. It succeeds simply because it discusses real publishing, not "ain't WYSIWYG programs neat!" printing.

The book has two major sections: one on publishing fundamentals and the other on desktop-publishing tools. This division teaches you publishing mechanics first and then explains how it works under the new desktop technology.

The publishing section is cogent, thorough, and well-structured. Anyone involved with publishing (desktop or otherwise) will learn a lot about the publishing process's life cycle and gain information that will aid future publishing and editorial endeavors.

In the second section, Felici and Nace wisely avoid being too product-specific. They say right off that the technology changes too quickly for them (or anyone) to suggest a particular publishing system. Still, you'll learn a lot about

several word processors' approaches, page description languages (especially Postscript), laser printers, and typesetting machines. They discuss both MS-DOS and Macintosh technology.

But they point out that today's products are the first steps towards true desktop publishing and so contain elements of good publishing that should evolve and merge as well as elements that should die off as users learn more about how publishing really works.

"It is our general thesis that tools work best in the hands of those who understand what they do and how to use them," the authors wrote in their preface. Amen! That thoughtfulness and perspective is exactly what's been lacking in the popular tool-based and solution-based approach pushed by the desktop-publishing carpetbaggers.

Publishing (desktop and otherwise) is a process. Understanding that process *and* the new desktop tools are what will lead to true desktop publishing. *Desktop Publishing Skills* will teach you the process and explain the tools. **RS 103**