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AbiWord
productivity tool
www.abisource.com

Overview

AbiWord is a free word processing program, similar to Microsoft Word and WordPerfect, which can be used for a wide variety of word processing tasks. Originally conceived as an open source project by the SourceGear Corporation, AbiWord's source code has been released and adopted by a thriving developer community that continues to make improvements and enhancements to the software. The software was initially released in December 1998, and its latest stable iteration (version 2.8.6) was released in July 2011.

Similar to Microsoft Word and rival open source word processing products, AbiWord supports basic word processing features such as creation of mailing lists and tables, mail merge, multiple page views, spell and grammar checking, and support for footnotes and endnotes as well as page headers and footers. Its unique distinction among other word processors is its ability to run on cross platforms operating systems including UNIX, Windows (95 and later), and MacOS X.

As a wholly volunteer project, AbiWord is licensed under the GNU General Public License. On its main website (www.abisource.com) there is an open call for contributors to assist in areas such as beta testing, bug triaging, translation, and coding.

Features

➢   The software from the main website (www.abisource.com/ download) downloads relatively easily. AbiWord 2.8.6 (latest stable release) is available in multiple languages and support

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is provided for Microsoft Windows and Linux operating systems.

➤ The following features are highlighted on the Take a Tour (www.abisource.com/tour) link on the homepage:

- Interoperability: AbiWord provides support for reading and writing standard documents such as OpenOffice.org, Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, Rich Text Format (RTF), and HTML webpages.

- Advanced document layout: Layout options include access to tables, bullets, lists, images, footnotes, endnotes, and formatting styles.

- Support for multiple languages: AbiWord dictionaries are available for more than 30 languages. Support is also provided for right-to-left, left-to-right, and mixed-mode

text. Thus, in addition to supporting European languages, AbiWord supports other languages like Hebrew and Arabic.

- Extensible Plugin Architecture: Plugins and tools (www.abisource.com/wiki/PluginMatrix) are available for users wishing to extend AbiWord functionality. This exhaustive list includes document and image importers, tools for creating document summaries, and a thesaurus and grammar checker.

➤ For first time users of the software, the AbiWord User's Manual (www.abisource.com/support/manual) is available in three languages (English, French, and Polish). An FAQ wiki addresses general questions posed by new users and the developers of the software. Technical support is provided via a Report a Bug page, a user's mailing list, and an online chat room.

➤ AbiWord's Reviews page (www.abisource.com/reviews) provides updated summaries on other users rating of the current release, its compatibility with rival software, usefulness of new features, and basic functionality.

➤ A publications page (www.abisource.com/papers) provides up to date information on lectures, articles, conference papers, and other miscellaneous publications contributed by the AbiWord Team.

How Cybrarians Can Use This Resource

Productivity Tool for Basic Word Processing Tasks

As a free, open-source, cross-platform word processor, AbiWord can be considered as a noteworthy alternative to proprietary (and sometimes expensive) products. This is an example of software that Cybrarians can promote via continuing education workshops or on a productivity tools resource page to library patrons seeking a functional inexpensive word processing application.

Here are some advantages that can be highlighted while promoting this resource:

➢ A user-friendly interface that is similar in layout, features, and function to other word processing software such as Microsoft Word and WordPerfect

➢ Quick access to tools required for writing, editing, formatting, and reading documents

➢ Compatibility with Microsoft Word for opening and saving documents although the program has its own proprietary file format

➢ Integration with the AbiCollab.net web service (abicollab.net), which allows users to store documents online, collaborate with multiple users simultaneously in real-time, share online documents with friends and colleagues, and perform format conversions on the fly

F Y I

The name AbiWord is derived from the root of the Spanish word *abierto* (open).[1]

Endnote

1. "AbiWord," Wikipedia, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AbiWord (accessed September 7, 2011).