

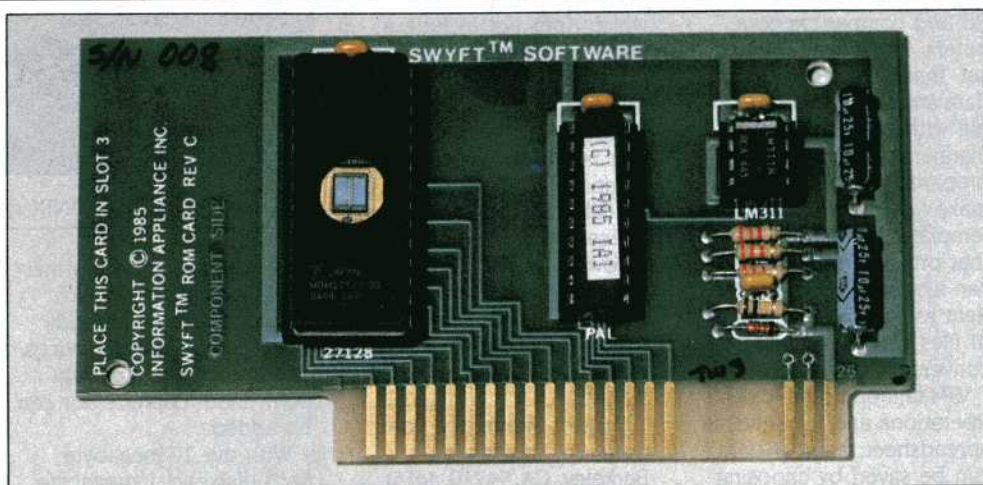
FIRST LOOK

Application Environment for Apple IIe

The SwiftCard from Information Appliance Inc. is a text-oriented data-handling product based in ROM that comes as an add-in card for the Apple IIe. The brainchild of Jef Raskin, former head of the Apple Macintosh development team, the card offers word-processing, information-retrieval, program-development, calculation, and telecommunications capabilities in an integrated package.

The SwiftCard environment is designed for speed. Because the program resides in firmware, there is no need to access a disk for program information. All data manipulation occurs in memory, roughly 40K bytes on a 64K-byte Apple IIe. The SwiftCard uses a disk format that equates one disk to that 40K-byte figure; this wastes some disk capacity, but the only times the program really has to use the disk drive are at the beginning of a work session (retrieving data) and at the end (saving it).

The program is available directly from the card's firmware when you turn on the computer. Since the SwiftCard serves as its own operating system, you need a single disk only to store data. Thus you can use the card with a minimal hardware setup: an 80-column 64K-byte Apple IIe, a monochrome monitor, and one disk drive. The SwiftCard does not interfere with other



The SwiftCard add-in for Apple IIe computers.

Apple software; if you place a program disk in the drive, one keystroke removes the SwiftCard system and loads the new program.

The environment is essentially a continuous scroll of text divided only by page breaks. You enter data as with any word processor, and the SwiftCard provides all standard word-processing functions. There are no files as such; if you wish to print a section of the scroll, you mark the top and bottom of the region and send the block to the printer. Formatting for printing is automatic, although you can change parameters when you want. Rapid movement through the text scroll is provided by a search algorithm that takes advantage of a peculiarity of the Apple IIe keyboard—two keys with apple symbols on either side of the space bar. Depressing one of those keys initiates a search for the next letter or combination of letters entered; you can abort the search by typing a

short string of gibberish. The right key searches forward; the left one moves backward.

The SwiftCard interfaces smoothly to the IIe's AppleSoft BASIC interpreter. You enter programs as raw text. You highlight the program text as you would for any word-processing block operation, press one command key, and the program executes. BASIC can also be used as a shortcut for some text manipulations. For example, you can store boilerplate phrases or paragraphs as string variables. Typing the variable name, marking it, and executing it recalls the stored text; retyping or complex copying operations are replaced by a few keystrokes. You follow similar mark-and-execute procedures for calculating numeric expressions in text and for setting printer and tele-

communications parameters.

You do the same to dial the modem. Once you are connected, the text of your on-line session is incorporated into the scroll. If the modem is set to auto-answer, the SwiftCard will act as a rudimentary bulletin board—it will accept an incoming text stream. If you are at the keyboard, the card stores the message without interrupting your work.

Priced at \$89.95, the SwiftCard package contains the card itself, self-adhesive labels for the nine command keys, a manual, a schematic diagram and theory of operation, a tutorial disk, and a utility to convert SwiftCard files to Apple ProDOS format.

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Inquiry 600.

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