Is Apple's new 'Lisa' set to take over?

Apple’s new top of the line computer, Lisa, looks set to change the way people think about computers in the office. Over $200 million worth of research has been done to make Lisa easy to use for those who have no previous computer experience. So successful has this research program been that people who have mastered existing computer operating systems may be at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding Lisa.

Lisa has been designed to allow office workers to use the computer in a way consistent with normal office procedures without learning special control codes or computer languages. The display screen is organised as a desk top with documents and 'folders' for file storage, the keyboard and numeric keypad can be programmed for special character functions.

Six integrated applications programs allow Lisa to fulfil the most common office tasks, word processing, financial planning, project management, business other familiar office objects. Once selected an object is used just as its real counterpart. Folders, for example, can be opened to reveal the contents, and documents can be refilled, copied or thrown away. Disk operating system commands are a thing of the past.

Each of the basic functions of all six of Lisa's software applications programs operate in the same way. Once a user has learned one application the others can be learnt quickly and easily.

Users of Lisa computers can share peripherals and exchange information and files over "AppleNet", Apple's new local area network system to which all Apple computers can be connected. Apple also plans to offer interface devices for other local area network configurations, including Xerox Corporations' Ethernet. As with AppleNet, all types of Apple computers will be able to use the interface.

"LisaTerminal", a data communications package, is also available to allow the computer to function as a teletype terminal, a DEC VT 52 terminal or an IBM-compatible terminal.

Computing power is provided by the Motorola MC68000 microprocessor, which has a 32-bit internal architecture and 16-bit external data transfers. Three other microprocessors control input and output functions, including the mouse, disk I/O and the keyboard.

A standard system has a million bytes of main memory and 1.7 megabytes of disk storage on two built-in 14cm miniloppsies. The disk drive, the Apple 871, is a proprietary Apple mechanism featuring high density double-sided operation, with a faster data transfer rate than conventional drives.

Also in the standard system is the five megabyte Apple Profile hard disk drive, allowing Lisa's applications programs and data to be stored on one disk. Three expansion slots are available internally.

Also introduced with Lisa were two new printers, a high resolution dot matrix device and a letter quality daisywheel type.

Cost of the Lisa system with one megabyte of RAM, two floppy disk drives and Profile hard disk drive with applications software is $11,950 and stocks should be available shortly.