Documentation

The Workview documentation comes in two loose-leaf binders (8½ by 11 inches) that are two inches thick. A five-part tutorial covers everything from installing the software to viewing waveforms from the SPICE simulator. The tutorial goes through creating symbols and schematics and running the simulator. Since this is a brand new product, it is good to see that a great deal of effort has been spent on documentation.

Each of the major facilities has its own manual. The VIEWDRAW and VIEWSIM manuals are each more than 100 pages long. The system also contains on-line help, which appears in a temporary window over the active window.

Discussion

The Workview package is a good example of what people mean when they talk about an integrated software package. At almost no time does the user have to leave the environment of the Workview system. The package is designed with the engineer in mind since simulation and analysis are integral to the operation of the system.

At present, the libraries do not contain symbols for the typical Intel and Motorola devices that would be used in designing a single-board computer; the user would need to create such symbols. The reason for this is that simulation in this case is a problem, and Workview places emphasis on being able to handle the total engineering problem. The design of application-specific integrated circuits is a possible use of this package.

While I could not find information in the manual about the size of circuit that can be simulated, there is always the problem that the XT does not have the power to simulate large problems quickly. Therefore, a version of the simulator running on the VAX computer is available, and the simulation run can be transferred to it. An AT would run three or four times faster than an XT. The speed of the XT does not appear to be a problem for schematic capture.

The Workview system worked very well for a new and very complicated software package. While I could not really exercise the package, I did not find any bugs while going through the tutorial. As with any new product, one can always think of additional features to be added, and I am sure that future releases will incorporate some. For example, it would be useful to have an increment number command when labeling device pins.

Since this is a new product, its acceptance by industry is an unknown. However, it makes a terrific package to use in an educational environment for teaching logic design and electronic circuits. It would allow students to do real design quickly, in a highly interactive fashion, since students would deal at first with small problems.

Acknowledgments

These products were obtained for review through the efforts of IEEE Micro's former managing editor, Richard Landry. I would like to thank Gerry Grindinger of FutureNet and Sri Srim and Mike Emley of Viewlogic for getting the packages to me.

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MicroStandards

remained intent on producing a high-quality standard in a long but realistic time frame. The P896 FutureBus is designed to support many generations of computer systems, long after the VME II and Multibus III's of the world have come and gone.

Thinly veiled attempts to play down the credibility of the competition is no way to make a point. Statements such as "FutureBus ... is still a long way from commercial reality," "will be more expensive than Multibus II," and "is more difficult to manage" are inconsistent with the facts and have the flavor of a marketing department desperately trying to create self-fulfilling prophecies when their own product is failing to gain a market share.

As long as more and more companies continue to discover the benefits of a bus standard of the caliber of the FutureBus, there will probably be attempts by the competition to play down its credibility by contrived arguments; the FutureBus working group may have to live with them, but they don't have to remain silent when the evidence to support these arguments is false.

FutureBus has long been regarded as a dark horse. In the first quarter of 1986, the dark horse comes out of the stable.

References

