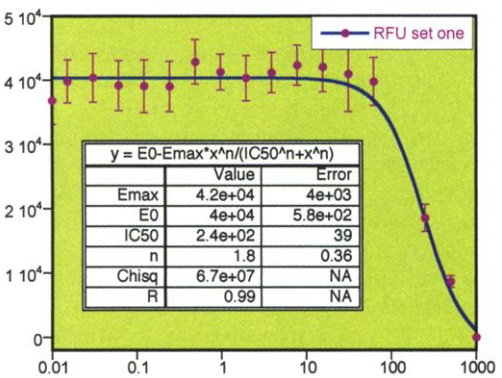
TECHSIGHTING
SOFTWARE

True to Its Roots

Simplicity is a virtue in computer programs. But as software developers have expanded the functionality of their offerings, there has often been a price to pay: an increase in the program's size and sometimes a decrease in its speed. Synergy's KaleidaGraph (version 3.5) is one application that has resisted these tendencies. With the latest version of KaleidaGraph, a user can rapidly transform data to readily create graphs. Best of all, the program takes up little space and has minimal RAM requirements. For example, under Mac OS 9, KaleidaGraph needs about 5 MB of RAM and less than 10 MB of hard disk space. The software has kept pace with the newer, faster computer processors and has added many new functions while retaining ease of use and maintaining consistency with older versions of the program. Synergy provides KaleidaGraph on both Macintosh- and Windows-compatible platforms. Collaborators on different platforms can trade KaleidaGraph files without confusion or loss of data.

KaleidaGraph 3.5
Synergy Software
Reading, PA
$155; $49.95 (upgrade)
610-779-0522
www.synergy.com



Making graphs. Sample output from KaleidaGraph showing error bars.

The KaleidaGraph program itself and a useful tour of the software both install easily from a CD. The multilingual "quick-start" guide circumvents the bulky manual and provides even novices with almost instant access to the program. Upon opening KaleidaGraph, one is presented with a data window containing columns and rows reminiscent of the Excel spreadsheet. After entering the data into the cells, the user is only a few clicks away from making the first graph. The program has a well-designed, graphic user interface and provides numerous options for modifying graphs. For example, to change the parameters of the abscissa (y axis) of a plot, one double-clicks on the abscissa and a new window appears showing the various options. Lines can be made thicker, and text and simple objects can be added by selecting the appropriate tool in the tool palette. The figure below shows a sample graph created by the program, complete with the error bars and statistics contained within the graph boundaries. Quickly prepared presentation graphs can easily be reworked into publication-quality documents for printing. The ease of graph generation in KaleidaGraph does not come at the cost of power. KaleidaGraph can work with millions of data points quickly and effortlessly.

Veteran users of KaleidaGraph will enjoy the 100 new features in version 3.5. In earlier versions of the program, data entry from other software products into KaleidaGraph occurred mostly by copying and pasting. However, data entry has now been simplified and expanded with the program's ability to open Excel worksheets directly. In addition, four new plot types have been added. KaleidaGraph routinely calculates basic statistics on every data set to include averages, standard deviations, and standard errors. A welcome addition is that of the Student's t tests. Synergy has indicated that an expanded repertoire of statistical functions may follow in the future if the demand from users is sufficiently high. KaleidaGraph can also perform basic ($y = mx + b$) and complex curve fits from a library of 100 industry-specific algorithms. The program's designers have also increased the range of files that KaleidaGraph can import and export. These include GIF, JPEG, PNG, TIFF, and Windows Bitmap files. There is also a calculator built into the program, if a quick function check is required.

KaleidaGraph is a simple program that has remained true to its roots and has not strayed from its original design—namely allowing users to create graphs on a user-friendly software. The range of graphing solutions with KaleidaGraph is impressive in view of its low price. Demo versions and purchase, upgrade, and cross-grade information may be downloaded at the Synergy Web site.

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TECHSIGHTING
SOFTWARE

From Database to Citation

Accuracy of attribution is essential for researchers in the scientific community, yet errors may occur in over 5% of the references (*1*). EndNote 4.0 gives authors seamless control over the citation process from electronic database to final citation. This reduces the likelihood of human error and increases the reliability of references.

In addition to overcoming inaccuracies inherent to typing, EndNote 4.0 acts as a remote search client, a reference formatter, and a file manager. With the dramatic growth in published material, researchers need powerful search engines capable of finding and retrieving information from large electronic databases. Information retrieval companies, such as Ovid Technologies, provide client software to conduct these searches. Transfer of electronic information into a bibliography program, however, requires complicated, customized filters. EndNote simplifies this process immensely by allowing documents to be imported directly into an EndNote library by means of a simple copy-and-paste operation. The program comes with a set of connection files for remote reference database sites that allow free access. Users at institutions with specialized databases onsite can modify the program to permit retrieval of information from these sources as well. The EndNote search engine is not as sophisticated as some Web-based or client software, but it more than makes up for this with its incredible speed. A list of 30 single citations took less than 15 minutes to retrieve and import into EndNote, compared with more than 1 hour for a Web-based search engine at the PubMed site of the National Library of Medicine (www.medportal.com/). Release 4 of EndNote makes searching more flexible, compared with version 3, by permitting users to both save search strategies and combine results from separate searches.

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The basics of citing references and formatting bibliographies inside word processing programs have not changed in EndNote 4. Indeed, few enhancements were necessary in the already strong integration between EndNote and Microsoft Word (or Corel WordPerfect). A reference