

import is the maximum of 100 variables and you can import data as text values. Text data, other than variable names, is lost. There is a wide variety of graph types available and with control over size, position and type of titles and labels. Insertion of error bars is very straightforward. Editing of graph components is from a menu system at the side of the screen. The program is very flexible in its ability to handle changes.

An attractive feature is the three types of maps on which data can be plotted. The maps available are very detailed for the US, but the world map files include European countries, major cities, rivers and lakes. If the equivalent map files for Europe were available that correspond to the American state and county boundaries, then the scope for displaying geographically-related data would be tremendous.

This version of the package has a Windows metafile file driver which enables export of the created graphs to Windows programs.

There has been a dramatic improvement in the capabilities of the recent releases of the statistics programs such as Minitab version 10 and SPSS for Windows. Even so, with all of them I have, at times, been frustrated trying to produce publication-quality graphs. Some of their limitations are on formatting and position of labels, legends, titles etc. Co-Plot has the potential to overcome most of these and the multi-layered menu system ensured that the process of learning to use this package was relatively short and easy.

I would recommend anyone who has to produce publication quality graphs and who is dissatisfied with their existing package to investigate whether this would meet their needs.

David Stirrups

Origin—The Ultimate Solution, Version 4.0

Publisher: Microcal Software, Northampton, USA

Origin requires an IBM-compatible 386 33 Mhz computer (or higher), 4 MB of RAM, and at least 4 MB of hard drive. Windows 3.0 or higher (including Windows 95) is essential and a maths processor is strongly recommended.

Origin is basically a program for producing high quality graphs, pie charts, histograms etc. for publication or thesis presentation and consequently will principally be of interest to researchers and University Departments. There are 24 graph types available as well as a three-dimensional option which permits rotation of the figure to the required position in any direction.

The program also includes a data analysis function, which allows statistical procedures to be performed prior to constructing appropriate figures. Most interested parties will probably be currently using programs such as Minitab, Statgraphics, Powerpoint and Harvard Graphics and it is therefore difficult for the lay user to appreciate what Origin has to offer which is not presently available in one or more of the above. Nevertheless, the combination of statistical and graphic capabilities in one package may appeal to those not in possession of Statgraphics.

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