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ONLINE DATABASES

BY CAROL TENOPIR

What's Happening with CD-ROM, Part 2: Networks and More

EARLIER THIS YEAR (*LJ*, February 1, p. 50-51) I wrote "What's Happening with CD-ROM, Part 1." It has taken me so long to write Part 2 not because there are so few "happenings," but because I wanted to see what events and issues survived the year as significant trends in CD-ROM products and uses in libraries.

In Part 1, I reviewed and described the many specialty sources that help librarians keep up with new developments in CD-ROM. One of these (*CD-ROM Review*) is now defunct; the others (*CD-ROM Librarian*, *Laserdisk Professional*, and directories from Meckler and Learned Information) seem to get better with each issue. A new periodical joined the scene as well in 1989. *CD-ROM EndUser* (Linda W. Helgerson, editor/publisher) is available free to all qualifying applicants. It is produced by the same people who sell *CD Data Report* for members of the database industry, but *CD-ROM EndUser* is aimed at users and purchasers of CD-ROM databases. It includes product reviews, hardware descriptions, and a variety of articles and columns of interest to libraries getting into CD-ROM. (DDRI, Inc., 6609 Rosecroft Place, Falls Church, VA 22043-1828; 703-237-0682.)

Networking

The most significant development in CD-ROM use in libraries in the last year has been the beginning of networking on a large scale. The rule for CD-ROM had until recently been "one disc, one workstation," posing problems for libraries that didn't want to subscribe to an expensive reference work that allows only one person at a

time to use it on a dedicated workstation. Several years ago we were told that networking CD-ROMs was impossible; disc access speed was so slow that response time would be degraded to unacceptable levels in a network environment. Happily, we now know this is not true.

Networking is possible for several reasons. The acceptance of the High Sierra/ISO 9660 standard for volume and file structure ensures all CD products that adhere to the standard will work on all computers. Microsoft MS-DOS Extensions software makes every CD-ROM drive act as just another peripheral and allows every drive and disc to be searched or shared. Response time can be degraded if several users make simultaneous search requests, but search software of today minimizes disc access and new CD drives are twice as fast as first-generation ones. Also, we now realize that searchers spend a lot more time typing, looking at the screen, printing citations, and just plain thinking than they spend doing things that actually require the system to access the disc.

These factors are allowing libraries to install local area networks with multiple workstation access to a single CD subscription per database. Libraries are establishing CD-ROM access centers with many different databases available in a network configuration allowing any workstation to access any of the databases. Some are extending this access throughout the building or the university so researchers and students can access the CD-ROM databases from their own desks. Librarians don't have the added worry of checking out database discs, trying to secure a separate disc for each machine, or scheduling for a popular database.

Local area networks are not inexpensive solutions, so they are being used primarily by university libraries, large corporations, or, to a lesser degree, large public libraries. All require LAN software and hardware in addition to the specific CD-ROM require-

ments. If you are starting from scratch we are talking a minimum investment of \$15,000 (or much more.) Your institution may already be operating a LAN for other things, however, and you may already have IBM compatible workstations, two things that could bring the cost of installing a CD LAN down to between \$2500 and \$5000. Plan on installation requiring a systems office or help from the CD network vendor.

There are several options for networking compact discs. Meridian Data, Inc. offers its CD NET in several models for networking between two to 75 workstations. CD NET comes with CD-ROM players, a network interface card, cables and connectors, server and workstation software, and a menu system for users to easily switch databases. It requires the Novell LAN software and Arcnet, Ethernet, or Token Ring hardware. CD NET works with nearly 100 CD-ROM databases, including popular products from SilverPlatter, UMI, Information Access, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, Dialog, and Lotus. (Meridian Data, Inc., 4450 Capitola Rd., Suite 101, Capitola, CA 95010; 408-476-5858.)

MultiPlatter, from SilverPlatter Information, Inc. allows up to 21 CDs to be accessed by any workstation in a network of up to ten workstations. Everything except the micro workstations is sold as one package, including networking software, network server, interface cards, MultiPlatter software and CD-ROM player, and a menu program that allows users to easily change databases. MultiPlatter uses Novell software, Ethernet hardware, and a Meridian file server. Installation and maintenance from SilverPlatter are part of the package as well. SilverPlatter is taking it slow in installing MultiPlatter. In its first year it has been installed in a handful of U.S. universities (including the University of Hawaii) in a purposely "Controlled Release Program." SilverPlatter databases such as ERIC, PsycInfo, and Medline are of course on the network,



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ONLINE DATABASES

but other firms' products are available as well. (SilverPlatter Information, Inc., 37 Walnut St., Wellesley Hills, MA 02181; 617-239-0306.)

Information Access Company (IAC) was one of the early entrants into the optical disc database fray with its InfoTrac system. InfoTrac soon grew into a family of databases including Academic Index, Computer Database, Legaltrac, National Newspaper Index, and others. This year it made available the Reference Center system for networking the InfoTrac family of databases. In addition, CD databases from Dialog, Disclosure, OCLC, and SilverPlatter are supported by the Reference Center, with others to be added. The Reference Center can be linked to a SilverPlatter MultiPlatter network or the IAC databases can be installed on other networks. (Information Access Company, 362 Lakeside Dr., Foster City, CA 94404; 415-378-5000.)

Other CD-ROM network programs are available to be used with your hardware and a separately purchased and installed LAN. LANtastic from Artisoft will support as many CD-ROM drives and workstations as you want. It is compatible with a number of LANs and will support all standard CD-ROM databases. *CD-ROM EndUser* recommends it for its comparatively low cost and conservative use of computer memory. Opnet from Online Computer Systems will service up to 100 users and can run on many standard LANs such as Novell or 3COM. Along with Meridian, it was an early entrant in the CD LAN field and it has over 70 CD-ROM networks installed in the Prince George's County Public School System in Maryland. More recent developments include a low-cost CD LAN called the CD Connection from CBIS Inc. and an H.W. Wilson Company LAN for its family of databases to be available early next year that will work with all types of hardware.

Just because a disc is in a standard format and you have the hardware and software that will allow it to be networked does not mean that you are legally able to network a CD-ROM database. The prices you see advertised by CD database providers usually are for *single workstation* use only. If you plan to use a database on a network you must have a site license that allows you to network the database. You must make sure this site license defines a "site" so you may

network all the workstations you wish. Such a license may cost as much as twice the advertised cost of a single-user database (but varies considerably, including no additional charge for PAIS or Wilson indexes).

Libraries no longer the majority

For the first few years of CD-ROM development libraries were the main customers. The growing variety of products are now aiming beyond this finite marketplace, making some librarians feel their voices are not heard as much as they once were. This makes asserting our rights and desires perhaps even more important. In October 1988, Michael Schuyler published a "Librarian's CD-ROM Manifesto" (*The Systems Librarian and Automation Review*, Nov. 1988, reported and reprinted in "Optical News," edited by Carol Kelley, *CD-ROM Librarian*, Jan. 1989, p. 4) calling for equal prices for equivalent print and CD-ROM products, quantity discounts for libraries, an at-cost replacement policy for missing or damaged discs, a reduction in costs of CD-ROM drives, and aims toward lowering CD-ROM prices overall. Based on the premise that libraries are the best customers, wanting want CD-ROM products to succeed but often on limited budgets, the manifesto calls for libraries and publishers to work together to solve these problems.

More and varied products

Although not aimed specifically at libraries, the increasing availability of innovative products is a trend of great interest to librarians. Most of the early CD-ROM databases were merely copies of existing bibliographic or directory products also distributed in print or online. This is not to say these products are not useful, as the enthusiastic response by libraries to such CD sources as Medline, ERIC, PsycInfo, Readers' Guide, etc., testifies. But more unique and innovative CD products were needed if the industry was to move beyond just a handy distribution option. Many of the new products in 1989 show this innovation.

Use of graphics and/or sound with text makes CD databases stand above online counterparts. Several are of special interest to libraries. SuperMap, from Chadwyck-Healey, Inc., has been available for a couple of years. It combines 1980 U.S. Census data with digital mapping to create color or black-and-white demo-

graphic maps and tables. There are now several other map databases. I mentioned the Electronic Anthology of Art from EBook, Inc. and EBSCO in my March 1 column, a product that combines pictures of art work with text describing the work and the artist. Abt Books of Cambridge, Mass. will publish *Notable Americans from the National Portrait Gallery* this fall. It includes over 3000 color portraits of famous Americans from the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery together with accompanying text. You can even buy Conan Doyle's complete Sherlock Holmes stories (with illustrations) for only \$79! (CMC ReSearch, Inc., Portland, Oreg.)

Specifically for libraries, UMI combines full-text articles (including photographs and illustrations) with an indexing database as its Business Periodicals Ondisc. After searching the ABI/INFORM business/management database users can change discs to view and print full-text images of articles from approximately 300 of the journals indexed in ABI/INFORM. The workstation (which is included in the subscription price) includes two CD-ROM drives, a high-resolution monitor, and a laser printer. The entire package costs \$19,900 per year with bimonthly updates (or \$14,950 per year without ABI/INFORM.)

Of the 500 CD-ROM databases now on the market, an increasing number are for the Macintosh. In addition to standard textual products, databases of graphics and sounds on CD-ROM are available for Mac application developers; Universe of Sounds from Optical Media Internat. can be used to assemble sound effects for Macintosh software. MicroMind's VideoWorks CD-ROM Clip Art and Color Animation disc allows users to transfer still and animated images into Mac programs. These may be used by programmers on the library staff or as a part of a library's microcomputer applications center, perhaps separate from the CD-ROM reference center.

With the capability of networking, better licensing agreements, and more innovative products, CD-ROM is becoming a widespread and essential part of many libraries' collections and services. CD-ROM is finally coming into its own as a medium with unique properties and advantages.

IN ADDITION: The education survey discussed in my September 1 column is reported in full in *Online* magazine, Nov. 1989.

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