

Book Reviews

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Cataloger's Desktop. Washington, D.C.: Cataloging Distribution Service, c1994. System requirements: IBM 386 or higher; Microsoft Windows 3.1 or OS/2 version 2.1. Subscription price: \$870; each additional user: \$16 (ISSN 1 073-4929).

The *Cataloger's Desktop* is one of the most significant tools to come to the aid of catalogers since the appearance of on-line cataloging utilities. Produced by the Cataloging Distribution Service (CDS) of the Library of Congress (LC), the 35 MB of information-rich online publications distributed on a single CD-ROM includes most of the essentials for contemporary catalogers, including the *Library of Congress Rule Interpretations*, subject cataloging manuals, US MARC format publications, and music cataloging decisions from LC. The 1.1 version (1995, issue 2) is reviewed here, but later issues have expanded to cover archival moving images, loose-leaf publications, CONSER documentation, graphic materials, map cataloging, rare books, authority records, children's subject headings, cutter tables, LC filing rules, and the NACO manual. A companion disk (not reviewed here) includes the classification schedules.

Installing the *Cataloger's Desktop* on a Pentium 75 system with 32M of memory took less than a minute. The program was loaded under Windows 95, for which there are no specific instructions (only OS/2 and Windows 3.1 are covered), but this did not present a problem. A version tailored for Windows 95 would ease some of the anxieties of installation. The user is informed of the file changes during installation, but there is no advanced warning in the documentation.

Once installed, the program loads very

quickly—in a matter of seconds on the system tested with a 2X CD drive. Calling up documents is also very quick, and multiple documents can be held open simultaneously. Since most documents are not loaded in their entirety, load times are typically very fast.

An extremely powerful search engine recalls every word indexed in an impressively short time. Nested, Boolean, proximity, and stem searching, among others, are possible. However, the program does not index every word in a document. This occurs most frequently in words that contain special characters or diacritics not in the standard ASCII character set. CDS chose to convert most such words to graphic images, which cannot be searched. Thus, when using the LC Rule Interpretations, one is unable to retrieve the example for "Poly-a-amino acids," nor even the cataloger-interpolated form that also appears as "Poly-[alpha]-amino acids" because the entire string has been rendered as a graphic, along with the Greek alpha character. Unfortunately, it is often the example that a cataloger will remember and try to search. There is some unevenness in how LC chose to execute this character-to-graphic conversion. In some examples, one finds that only a single character has been rendered as a graphic, giving one at least some chance of retrieving the example it is embedded in. For instance, the heart symbol in the example "I♥a piano" is a graphic, but not the surrounding words or the cataloger interpolation that follows. In other cases, the entire example (as in the amino acids case above) has been converted as a graphic image, effectively blocking them from being searched.

Templates are used to help the user

refine a search to a particular category within a document (e.g., query only the scope notes in the subject manual). This can help to focus a search. However, for categories with long names (e.g., "geographic headings and subdivisions") there is no way to see the number of matches, if any, because the dialog box cannot be sized.

The software includes provision for operation from a network. This option was not examined for this review, but not only is this a cost-effective means of implementing the program for large cataloging departments, it also makes uniform management easier since customized annotations to the documents can be shared across workstations. CDS has very aggressive pricing for multiple users.

Little printed documentation comes with *Cataloger's Desktop*—a 25-page booklet and a reference card are all that is supplied to get one started. There are extensive help files online, including a "tour" for an overview of the program's features, but the tutorial is static and unengaging. For the user accustomed to the structure of Windows help files, the mechanics of following a topic may require some experimentation. At least one path in the tutorial ends up as a blind "jump not found" message and bounces one back to the beginning.

Rather than writing custom software, CDS elected to develop *Cataloger's Desktop* in the "infobase" environment of Folio Views. This has made the product available much sooner than it would have been otherwise, and at considerably less expense. The tradeoff is that the program must work within a pre-existing structure, even allowing for the flexibility that is built into the Folio Views development environment. For example, to follow a link, one must click twice—an ergonomic difference from some Windows help systems and most Web browsers that may require some getting used to on the part of users. Many of the conventions of Windows programs do not exist in *Cataloger's Desktop*. The occasional user of Folio may have some difficulty remembering certain concepts, such as the distinction between the "previous,"

"backtrack," and "trail" icons.

The software does permit a certain degree of customization—e.g., the toolbar can be placed horizontally or vertically, individual icons can be selected for the toolbar, the number of lines of text can be specified to display in the table of contents window, etc. If one wishes to display icons with both text and pictures, the result will likely force the images to run off the edge of the screen. This happens even in the default configuration when using an 800 x 600 display, with no way to scroll through to view them all. The alternative is to display either text or pictures (but not both), or to reduce the number of icons on the toolbar. The choice of some icons in the toolbar is rather idiosyncratic, such as the apple for the tutorial session. There are no pop-up sensitive areas of the screen or implementation of the right-mouse button to explain features or access properties as one finds in many Windows programs. The toolbar preferences are applied across all documents and help files, but, curiously, not to the tutorial session, which is a bit disconcerting. Few of the dialog boxes have help buttons to explain the options. Those that do (such as the query dialog box) take the user directly into an infobase for help, bypassing the familiar Windows style help screens.

A particularly useful feature of the software is its ability to create "shadow files," which permit one to highlight text, add notes, create links, etc., without affecting the integrity of the original text. Multiple shadow files may be used and individual copies can be tailored in a workplace where the program is shared. There are tools to reconcile shadow files if later versions of the software are distributed so that one's previous notes are not lost—welcome news to those libraries still laboriously transferring notes from earlier volumes of LC subject headings—although in some cases this will prove impossible to implement because the underlying structure may change. Security can be set so that others do not inadvertently alter notes in a shared copy. According to the CDS Web page, a most serious deficiency—the inability to cut and past documents—is remedied in the Decem-

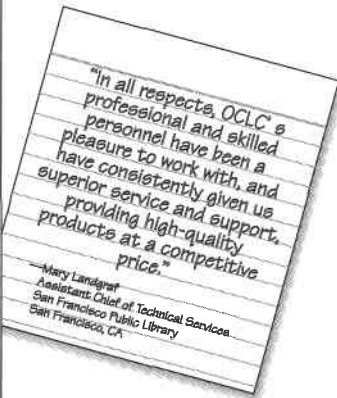
ber 1996 issue.

In spite of the criticisms, *Cataloger's Desktop* is a very important product that deserves to be in every library with anything beyond a minimal cataloging operation. The wealth of documentation either already available or in the planning stages, the convenient and rapid access to cata-

loging tools, and the ability to personalize and mark up documents will be a boon to productivity and quality. At this point, the only significant omission from *Cataloger's Desktop* is the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*.—John K Duke, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.



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