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Innovations Affecting Us / Multimedia

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Innovations Affecting Us

Column Editor, **Judy Luther** (The Faxon Company)

Multimedia

While at ALA in New Orleans, I roamed the exhibits looking for exciting new products/services and decided to write this column on multimedia. While multimedia was introduced about five years ago, it does not appear to enjoy the widespread use in academic libraries that is true for CD-ROM versions of printed indexes. This prompted me to investigate current products and their applications.

Multimedia can be described as the use of PC software to integrate access to text/graphics and audio/video/animation combined at one workstation. We are interested here in the format which provides the user with an interactive mode, allowing them to select different options/paths through the topic of their choice.

For example, with an encyclopedia, you could read about Mozart, see a movie clip from "Amadeus" and hear part of his symphony, all by making selections of icons in a windows-type environment. This approach gives the user a more complete picture of Mozart than the printed text.

Until now, the multimedia works I have seen advertised were designed to demonstrate the capabilities of the system, and appear to have applications limited to specific markets. Once we grasp the potential to access and deliver different kinds of information alternatives, we can see virtually unlimited applications.

Products previously demonstrated at ALA can be used in the library but are primarily targeted to different user groups. Microsoft has produced *Bookshelf* and *Encarta* which are priced for the individual consumer and marketed through distribution channels such as Egghead Software. IBM has created *Columbus* and *Illuminated Books & Manuscripts*, which are targeted for K-12 and marketed towards the educational system.

Academic libraries can buy multimedia titles along with the appropriate hardware and set up a workstation for their users. The University of Tennessee acquired four titles in art history and the classics and these are being used in the library on an experimental basis. Linda

Phillips, at the University Library commented that they have had mixed reactions from their users/potential users. Each program requires an expensive hardware configuration and operates with different software requiring some user support. If you'd like to talk with Linda about their experiences, you can reach her at 615-974-4702.

Another option is to obtain the necessary hardware/software and develop your own applications. The University of Delaware has applied multimedia to teach Boolean searching while Virginia Commonwealth University has created a multicultural multimedia archive. Community colleges tend to be far more active in the instructional use of multimedia. It would appear that the costs seem more justifiable for educational applications rather than information retrieval at the institutional level.

MICROSOFT

This year, Microsoft introduced the 1993 edition of *Bookshelf* for \$195 which includes seven of the most frequently used reference works on one compact disc: *American Heritage Dictionary*, *Roget's II Thesaurus*, *Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*, *Hammond World Atlas*, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, *Concise Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*; *World Almanac and Book of Facts 1993*. The ability to keyword search all of these reference works simultaneously allows us to identify a city, have it pronounced, listen to the national anthem for that country, look at pertinent international statistics and locate it on a map. We can see the power of being able to search across several reference sources at the same time. (We've been able to replicate searches across different databases in Dialog, but these usually produce citations rather than specific content.)

Required hardware includes a 386 machine with windows, a CD-ROM drive and a sound card. For \$400, PC owners can obtain a multimedia kit which includes the CD-ROM drive and the sound card.

Other titles offered by Microsoft are: *Multimedia Beethoven: The Ninth Symphony*, *Stravinsky*, *Mozart*, *Dinosaurs*, *Cinematica*, *Musical Instruments*. For

\$395 you can buy *Encarta* — a full 29-volume encyclopedia — Funk & Wagnalls expanded with 1000 new articles, plus hours of music, speech, instructive animations and detailed illustrations, (but not video). For more information contact Microsoft Corporation, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399, (800-323-3577).

IBM

Last year IBM introduced two titles: *Columbus: Encounter, Discovery and Beyond*, a multimedia view of the Renaissance from 1200-1600 and *Illuminated Books and Manuscripts*, which demonstrates the relationship between literary works, (such as poetry, drama, letter) and history, science, the arts and social issues. This year they will be followed by two more *Evolution/Revolution* from 1890-1930 and the Bill of Rights.

Columbus has over 180 hours of multidisciplinary content giving users the opportunity to navigate through video, text, audio and graphics as they discover the world as it was then. Programs allow us to learn about the time of Columbus by looking at the chronology of events, selecting specific topics represented by icons, and exploring their relationship to this era.

The necessary hardware (a 386 PC with a CD-ROM drive, a laserdisc for video, and a rewriteable optical drive) are included with both titles (*Columbus* and *Illuminated Books*) for about \$13,000. Future applications will be priced at approximately \$1950 for the laser disc and the CD-ROM.

Universities with education departments are likely to acquire these titles to demonstrate how multimedia can be used in educational efforts. These programs illustrate the concept/role of the teacher as a "guide on the side" (a coach) instead of a "sage on the stage" (a lecturer), since they allow students to learn by exploring a multimedia file with information available in all formats.

For further information on IBM'S multimedia programs, contact **Paco Garcia**, Product Administrator, IBM, 4111 Northside Parkway, Atlanta GA 30327, (404)-238-5470. ☞