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Nouvelle Cuisine-The Windows95 Change

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Nouvelle Cuisine

The Windows95 of Change

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Early in 1996, the UNM systems departmental staff discussed the option of purchasing new computers with the Windows95 (Win95) operating system rather than the familiar Windows 3.xx (Win3.xx). Win95 had been introduced late in 1995 and horror stories were circulating on the difficulties of migrating to the new Windows environment. We concluded that we were not prepared to support yet another computing platform. (We are supporting more than 500 devices on an Ethernet network ranging from 286 DOS PCs to the latest Pentium PCs plus a sprinkling of Macs.) Besides, few applications were written for Win95 and our campus computing department was not yet supporting it. We did decide to purchase a few copies of Win95 for testing and staff training. In just a few months, it has become clear that we will reverse that decision. We will be making the move to Win95 very soon. What has prompted this change in such a short time and why is there is such a rush to embrace Win95?

OCLC announced its future plans and time lines for desktop software and telecommunications enhancements in "Maps to 21st century access show how to avoid technological obsolescence," <<http://www.oclc.org/oclc/new/n224/feat.htm>> and in the *OCLC Newsletter*, November-December, 1996, No. 224.) They now recommend Pentium-based PCs with 32 MB RAM memory, 1 GB hard disk, CD-ROM drive, SVGA monitor, and Windows 95. OCLC's future software applications will be based on Microsoft's 32-bit operating system environment for Win95 and Windows NT. Consistent with Microsoft's future plans, OCLC expects to end system support of DOS and Windows 3.11 (Windows for Workgroup) in 1997. Support for OCLC's DOS-based software applications (Passport/ILL/CAT ME for DOS) will end by January 1998. The expected transition from OCLC's proprietary telecommunication networks (multi-drop and X.25) to a standard TCP/IP protocol network and PPP dial-up access will be phased in starting in 1997. The time lines

may slip, but these are dramatic announcements which will have serious impact on the library computing community. Must-reading for all library systems departments and library managers.

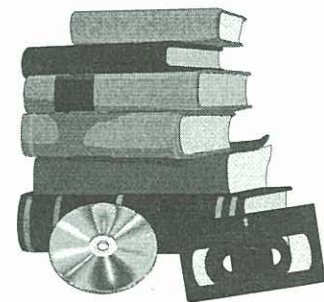
As if feeling the squeeze from software vendors isn't compelling enough, hardware vendors are entering the fray. Soon after the release of Win95, PC hardware vendors offered the choice of Win95 or Win 3.11 at the time of purchase. As of January 1997, Windows 3.11 is no longer an option on an average 166 MHz Pentium desktop model from a major direct purchase hardware vendor. This may not be true across the board of all hardware vendors and all models, but the hand writing is on the wall.

Another hardware related issue is the amount of RAM required for Win95. Back in 1995 they (Microsoft) specified 8 MB of RAM as a minimum requirement. Reality has set in and now they suggest a minimum of 16 MB of RAM. Our real world tests show 32 MB RAM is much more robust for true applications in a multi-tasking environment. For example, a cataloger is looking at a full text PDF-formatted electronic journal through the **Adobe Acrobat Reader** in one window and a Web-based local OPAC record is being displayed through **Netscape** in another window. In a third window is an active connection to OCLC displaying a full MARC record. An edited local record is just a cut-and-paste away. Sound far fetched? That is just the kind of computing environment that OCLC and other library vendors are planning for. Fortunately the price of RAM memory has decreased. We are in the process of upgrading all 486 or faster PCs to a minimum of 16 MB of RAM memory in anticipation of running Win95. How realistic it will be to load Win95 on a 486 processor will remain to be seen. We don't expect the fastest response times, but hopefully we can extend their useful lives by dedicating the 486 PCs to special applications and avoid the high end multi-tasking applications. Time and patience will tell.

Check with your library automation vendor. Chances are all new software development will be designed for the Win95 platform. We are an **Innovative Interfaces, Inc.(III)** library automation site. We are planning a major hardware and software upgrade this summer. Included in that transition is the expected purchase of the III's **Cataloger's Workstation** desktop software. Surprise, it will require Win95.

There are many more examples of key and exciting applications that are designed for the Win95 operating system; Netscape Gold, MS Office 95 and 97, Adobe Photoshop and PageMaker, the list goes on. I have just made the move to Win95. It is an adjustment, but the road was/is not too bumpy. Be assured, that someday soon Win95 will be coming to a desktop near you. 🐾

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