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Test Driving CD-ROMS - Reviews of CD-ROM Products

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are utilized to supplement reference desk service, on weekends, holidays, for short term replacements. However, this has not been defined as outsourcing in this volume, when in fact, it is alternative staffing but takes place on-site rather than off-site.

Benaud and Bordeianu have methodically and creatively authored a book that summarizes the status of what we currently know about outsourcing in academic libraries. The book is comprehensive and documents the literature that precedes it relevant to libraries and extends the context to other related aspects from the management literature. The survey data which was the cornerstone of the volume, did not reveal many surprises, but it will be valuable to compare the findings if another survey is administered close to a decade from now. Interpretation was clear and supported. The promotional literature for this book states "as outsourcing becomes more commonplace ... the need for an authoritative guide becomes indisputable." This book does not disappoint. It complements the current literature highlighting trends facing academic libraries.

The bibliography is almost encyclopedic in its coverage of issues such as retrospective conversion and approval plans. Indexing, sometimes an omitted feature in many works, is specific and useful. Librarians will find this work easy to read and use, and probably be encouraged to investigate if there are other ways that they can employ smarter ways to handle a variety of activities. Outsourcing will continue to be a practice requiring careful monitoring and that libraries and their leaders and managers will be guided by in their selection, management and control of important resources. This book does not treat those issues, but with more evidence of outsourcing in libraries, the negotiation involved in it will become skills librarians will need to refine.

Sources

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TestDriving CD-ROMs — Reviews of CD-ROM Products

McGraw-Hill Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science & Technology and Barron's Book Study Notes

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McGraw-Hill Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science & Technology, McGraw-Hill, 11 West 19 St., New York, NY
Internet URL:
www.books.mcgraw-hill.com

\$995 single user; \$1295 LAN (unlimited number of workstations in same building; \$1595 WAN (unlimited workstations in multiple buildings on same site; Annual updates: \$198 single user; \$295 LAN; \$395 WAN
Reviewed by **Norman Desmarais**

McGraw-Hill Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science & Technology corresponds to the 20-volume **McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science & Technology**, Eighth Edition and the **McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms**, Fifth Edition. It includes over 7,100 articles and more than 122,000 definitions. It also includes biographical sketches for more than 250 important people in the history of science and engineering as well as curriculum outlines with appropriate articles for student instruction in six disciplines: biology, chemistry, engineering, earth sciences, health sciences, and physics.

Multimedia elements comprise 58 animations; almost 1,400 color illustrations, photographs, charts, and tables which include 30 topographic maps and 45 sky maps; and crystalline animations for most chemical elements. Most of the images, including the formulas and 142 photographs, are in GIF format; but there are also many images in BMP format. The first version of the encyclopedia has garnered high praise for its graphics. The astronomical photos are particularly striking. Unfortunately, the CD contains only a relatively small number of the images contained in the print version. This is not to say that the disc is deficient. Rather, it is full to capacity; and the editors had to choose which images to exclude to keep the title to a single disc.

There are two general ways to explore the **McGraw-Hill Multimedia Encyclopedia**: browsing and searching. One browses the contents by clicking the down-arrow button to the right of the Contents box on the toolbar and selecting the resource to browse (encyclopedia, dictionary, biographies, or study guides) and typing a topic of interest in the Find box or using the scroll

bar to move to the desired topic.

The encyclopedia has a very strong search engine that will locate specific terms, phrases, or groups of terms and phrases quickly and easily. Phrases like black hole, internal combustion engine, and high definition television need not be included in quotation marks or any other marks to distinguish them from single word terms. The engine will support up to four terms connected with the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT. The engine will search the full text of the encyclopedia; but researchers can opt to limit the search to article titles only. They can also indicate the relationship between the terms—up to fifty words apart.

While the search engine defaults to searching the CD, researchers can opt to search the Web also. The program will let them select Excite, Lycos, or Infoseek as their preferred search engine. If that's not enough, researchers can focus a search on one or more of the ten subjects covered by the encyclopedia: agriculture/forestry, astronomy, biology, chemistry, computer science, earth sciences, engineering, mathematics, medicine/psychology, or physics. Topic filters permit browsing any of 20 major topic areas (and nearly 100 subtopics) in the **Encyclopedia**.

Results display in a large, easily legible typeface and users can enlarge or reduce the size as desired or quickly return to the original size with a single click. Researchers can have the results sorted alphabetically (default) or by relevance. Links open new windows. Users can tile them or cascade them. They can easily forget how many they have open. There's no Back button to return to a departure point. The assumption is that one will close the window. Users can close individual windows at will to conserve RAM; but there's a button on the toolbar to close them all with one click. Some of the icons are not intuitive nor are they sensitive to mouse movement where they would give a pop-up explanation.

A search for "discrete cosine transform" produced two articles but neither had a detailed description. None of the articles on the turbine or specific turbines (gas, hydraulic, steam, etc.) contained any illustrations to show how a turbine worked. Al-

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though the article on nuclear reaction contained no illustrations, it had a detailed animation of a chain reaction. As mentioned earlier, the print edition of the encyclopedia has many more illustrations than the CD. For example, the article on the motor has thirteen figures in the print edition but none on the CD. The article on Neptune has no illustrations on the CD while the book has several figures and color plates. The CD article on the moon lacked the 19 figures and four tables from the print; but it included an animation and excellent explanation of the moon's orbit.

Researchers can easily view any illustrations, maps, or other graphics associated with an article. There's no media gallery; but many of the images would not make much sense viewed out of context of the article. Researchers can print articles, copy portions to the Windows clipboard, bookmark them for quick reference later, view associated multimedia features (where available), look for a particular word or phrase within the article, or look up a word in the dictionary. Copying works fine for the text, but formulas will usually appear garbled and exponents and subscripts will display on the same line as real numbers.

The text is authoritative and well written. In fact, the McGraw-Hill *Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science & Technology* has become or should be the point of departure to begin research on a scientific or technological topic. It is not likely that any library other than those specializing in science and technology will need both the print and the CD versions. If one needs the plethora of illustrations that the print version contains, then the CD will not suffice. If the text is the primary concern, the CD is an excellent purchase. The search engine is fast and powerful. It makes searching the encyclopedia and other associated resources much faster than locating the same information in print.

Barron's Book Study Notes — \$29.99
— IBM 486 33 or compatible, 8 MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, 640x480 x256 color display, double speed CD-ROM drive, Windows compatible sound card to view video clips. — available from I. Hoffmann + Associates, Inc., 34 Ross St. Toronto Ontario Canada M5T 1Z9 — 416-977-6732/416-977-2301 — fax: 416-977-0766 — email: H+A@h-plus-a.com.<<http://www.h-plus-a.com>>
Reviewed by **Norman Desmarais**
(Providence College)

This edition of *Barron's Book Study Notes* is a collaboration between Corel and

World Library, Inc. which released a version of the notes in 1993. Both company names appear on the packaging, with Corel displayed most prominently. However, Corel recently sold the rights to Hoffmann + Associates and no longer sells or supports the product. This edition, identified as version 1.00.016, has the same text as the World Library version. In addition, it includes the *American Heritage Concise Dictionary*, 3rd ed., a different search engine (Fulcrum Technologies, Inc.), author biographies, and a media portfolio which provides access to ca. 48 illustrations, 12 author pictures, and 3 videos.

The product was designed to operate under Windows 3.x; and it runs on Windows 95 and Windows NT. It contains descriptive and critical information for 101 literary works and 66 authors. The notes cover the plot summary, character analysis, and themes. They also include sample tests followed by the answers, term paper ideas, a glossary, excerpts of commentary by noteworthy critics, and a bibliography.

The viewing panel occupies 2/3 of the screen and the search tools appear as a series of tabs and windows on the left of the viewing panel. The text appears on numbered pages, similar to a printed edition. However, the typeface is too small for comfortable viewing, so the student will have to close the search panel which expands the viewing panel and makes the text more legible.

The search engine uses a card catalog metaphor and even includes graphics of catalog drawers when one selects author/title and subject tabs. The title tab defaults to showing all titles in the database. Students can select an individual author to get a list of titles by that author. The 101 titles represent the work of 66 authors, so very few have more than one work included. Shakespeare has the most with 14 titles. Generally, the critiqued work is the most important, most representative, or the most studied. In some cases, one might argue otherwise. For example Camus's *The Stranger* is included but not *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Plague*, *The Fall*, or *The Rebel*.

Many of the titles (33 or 1/3 of the entire bibliography) appear alphabetized under initial articles. The earlier World Library edition had them alphabetized in proper sequence, ignoring the initial ar-

ticles. In a large database, this would constitute a retrieval problem. In a database of the size of *Barron's Book Study Notes*, it is only a minor inconvenience.

Students can also select all male or all female authors. However, there are only eight female authors listed here (Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Pearl S. Buck, Willa Cather, Harper Lee, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Edith Wharton). Women who wrote under male pen names, like George Eliot, appear in the male list, even though the accompanying biographies properly identify them as female.

This edition of *Barron's Book Notes* is particularly useful for its processing capabilities. A toolbox includes buttons for students to highlight text with four different colored markers, place bookmarks or annotations, and copy or print an entire book, a range of pages, or just one's

personal notes, bookmarks, or highlighted text. The text of the book notes is stored in Envoy format while the biographies are in HTML format.

Readers can toggle on or off an automatic scroll feature and set the scroll rate and quickly jump to a specific page or to an annotation. A notepad icon opens a word processor. The program defaults to Windows Notepad; but students can configure this to open their favorite word processor. Double clicking on any word will open the *American Heritage Concise Dictionary*, 3rd ed. and go directly to the definition.

All students will consult *Barron's Book Study Notes* or a similar product at some time in their course of study. Competitor products, like *Monarch Notes* and *Cliff Notes* (www.cliffs.com) have a larger selection of authors and titles. However, not all titles in the series can be found at bookstores and, according to Murphy's law, the desired title will usually not be available when needed. The Web page for the Cliff notes is primarily a search engine for its catalog of titles. After locating a desired title, students will have to purchase it online before gaining access.

Barron's Book Study Notes is cheaper than buying the set of corresponding printed booklets. Moreover, they are more thorough and authoritative than the competitors. *Barron's Book Study Notes* is an important resource that all students should consider purchasing. 🐰