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"Reference services microcomputer management issues in other settings: Scripps Institution of Oceanography"

presented at Santiago Library System Reference Committee program entitled "Mission control: managing CD-ROM and reference-desk microcomputer workstations", La Habra, California, 19 October 1989

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HARDWARE

ARC turbo PC (8088) clone

boots up into turbo mode automatically via ARC turbo utility
always switched on

EGA monitor:

color is very important for readable display
bibliographic information & highlighted terms stand out clearly
use screensaver option of EGA board's software

HP Thinkjet printer:

quiet but ink reservoir too small and jets prone to clogging

Philips CM100 CDROM player:

trouble-free for 2 years, 10 months
public load the compact disks into player themselves
signage stating where to insert disk; before signage, 3 users loaded
compact disks into floppy disk drives

multiple floppy disk formats supported for downloading

IBM 360K 5 1/4 and 720K 3 1/2 floppy disk drives

Macintosh 800K and 400K

via 3 1/2 drive and Copy II PC Deluxe Option Board

located where easily seen by reference and circulation staff

HARD DISK MANAGEMENT

files organized into functional directories

minimal files in root directory; many software are accessed via PATH

browse files on hard disk every few months to delete orphan files

downloaded from CDROM

DIRectory MAGIC for managing files:

public domain software from PC MagNet

make and remove directories; make hidden directories; set file
attributes; copy, move, and delete single and multiple files
takes up minimal disk space;

Norton Utilities for better disk performance:

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make files contiguous on disk (unfragmented)
put heavily-used files first on hard disk eg CDROM search software

hard disk backed up with Fastback Plus

when new release of CDROM search software and disk received, keep old software and compact disk for at least one month to ensure that new software version and disk works. Copy old software to a separate directory to keep it safe and available for quick recall.

file attributes:

critical files are read-only

hidden directories:

software not used by public is hidden where DIR cannot see it
eg wordprocessor, utility software

park hard disk heads:

parking disk drive heads avoids damage to disk when micro is bumped
utility software parks heads after 5 minutes of no usage

TROUBLESHOOT/MAINTENANCE

After observing downloading problems during normal CDROM usage and tracing it to a corrupted COMMAND.COM file, AUTOEXEC.BATch made to copy a fresh COMMAND.COM into root directory during each bootup.

MEMORY:

public domain software that quantifies the micro's available RAM memory; used to diagnose memory conflicts

clean CDROM disks occasionally

keep duplicate copies of AUTOEXEC.BATch and CONFIG.SYS hidden away in a directory; when experimenting or loading new software, you may need an unrevised copy of them

SOFTWARE

Execution of AUTOEXEC.BATch file hidden from users by putting CTTY NUL at beginning and CTTY CON at end of AUTOEXEC.BATch. Users do not need to see what is going on during booting.

AUTOMENU:

menu software controls usage of CDROM & other software on micro
no option or access to DOS prompt
for access to DOS, CTRL-C aborts batch file invoked by AUTOMENU
early version of Scripps' system described in LASERDISK

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PROFESSIONAL, 1(2):39-47, July 1988.

AskSam:

text management software converts ASCII file into searchable database
goal: make bibliographic databases in differing formats searchable through one search interface!
received SciMate and DBASE databases; converted into ASCII bibliographies; merge with other ASCII bibliographies into one or more AskSam databases

BROWSE:

public domain file-viewing software for looking at the contents of downloaded files; used to assist users with their downloads

Norton Control Center:

one of Norton Utilities
change CDROM display colors from default vendor settings
make color display more vivid; draw attention with brighter color to most important information onscreen, eg bibliographic citation, reverse-video highlighted terms.

SBREAK:

public domain software which splits large downloaded files into user-specified file sizes
use DOS' COPY + command to merge them.
used to assist users with their downloads.

SLICE/SPLICE:

Slice distributes large downloaded files onto 360K floppies;
Splice merges then into one file on another hard disk.
Public domain software from PC MagNet; used to assist users with their downloads.

TED:

public domain word processor from PC MagNet which takes up minimal disk space

TIMEPARK:

public domain utility software which parks hard disk drive heads after a specified period of inactivity; parked heads=safe disk.

TRAINING & USE BY STAFF & PUBLIC

printed how-to manual located next to CDROM micro
its orange cover alerts reference staff that the person looking at the manual may need assistance

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however, onscreen help is frequently more appealing than printed help

menu option to browse how-to manual before beginning to search CDROM;
manual is browsed using Sidekick's READ-ME.COM software.

CDROM search software has its own HELP command which accesses an
inadequate vendor-supplied ASCII help file; this ASCII HELP file was
rewritten to be more descriptive and include local relevant examples

popup help manual accessed at any time by hot key
Polaris Rescue software uses approx 25K RAM
review: CD-ROM LIBRARIAN, 3(5):10-14, May 1988.

unobtrusive keystroke recorder to examine enduser searching & playback
keystrokes for CDROM search demonstrations
Total Recall software uses approx 65K RAM
review: CD-ROM LIBRARIAN, 4(6):12-16, June 1989.

usage logging

CDROM user status and CDROM entry/exit times logged with batch
files; 582 hrs in 1988 and 617 hrs in 1987; Scripps is 50% of users
and 43% of time.

Time logging accomplished with Norton Utilities' TIMEMARK software.
TIMEMARK runs from the DOS prompt; CDROM software has to be entered
and exited for TIMEMARK to execute before entry and after exit.
Logging system described and data presented in LASERDISK
PROFESSIONAL, Nov 1989, in press.