

Managing the New Electronic Information Products

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Second Edition

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Preface to the 2nd Edition

This book grew out of comments made to the authors over the course of two years. During that time, the number and sophistication of **CD-ROM** products has increased. With the growth came confusion.

The purpose of this book is to bring together information which can help anyone considering the purchase of a **CD-ROM** to be a more informed buyer. It's obvious to us that **CD-ROM** technology holds significant promise for libraries of all sizes and types. The challenge for librarians is to ask the significant questions, understand the implications of **CD-ROM** products, and manage the complete **CD-ROM** process--from initial screening to collection development.

We are aware that a certain amount of material has been omitted from this book. Our editorial stance required that we be selective in the amount of information presented, the number of examples and cases and in the type and amount of technical detail included. The objective of this book is to assist librarians in making better and more informed decisions regarding **CD-ROM** acquisition and management.

We want readers to be better equipped to gather relevant information and begin the process of making an informed decision about complex technology issues. We hope to provide a management road map which can help make the **CD-ROM** a useful addition to the library's collection.

The book can be read straight through. Its structure follows the progression of the **CD-ROM** evaluation and purchasing process. Since some readers will want information about a specific part of the process, we have tried to make the chapters self-contained. Important points are discussed in several places to make certain that readers looking for information on a topic are made aware of related issues.

Chapter I The CD-ROM Challenge gives some of the reasons for buying a **CD-ROM** and includes a discussion of a critical first step--the development of a strategic information plan. For readers who want more information on creating a plan of this type, we refer them to *Marketing Library Services: A Nuts-and-Bolts Approach*, published in 1988 by Riverside Data.

Chapter II Critical Management Issues gathers together the range of issues which a **CD-ROM** affects in a library. The approach to management we take is that the electronic information product must be managed in terms of its characteristics as a product, its pricing, its placement in the information scheme, and its promotion to the user community.

Chapter III Cost Justification: A Practical Approach builds upon our discussion of the subject in our earlier book *Marketing Library Services: A Nuts-and-Bolts Ap-*

proach. Feedback from our readers indicated that more details, budget sheets, and example cost justifications are needed. We've provided them. In addition to a detailed discussion of the components of an effective cost-justification approach, we have included budget worksheets and a complete cost justification memorandum for a popular CD-ROM product, ABI/INFORM.

Chapter IV Technology Essentials is a quick review of the technology associated with the CD-ROM. We are not describing how the CD-ROM works. Instead, our approach is to provide a larger picture of the system into which the CD-ROM fits. This chapter and the Glossary in Chapter IX can help readers assess what they need to know and how to build the necessary base of information about PCs, CD-ROMs, software, and the other pieces of the puzzle.

Chapter V The Product Arena provides information about CD-ROM prices, the types of discs available, and profiles of three products which we think anyone considering a CD-ROM should examine. A benchmark product does a number of things well, and familiarity with each can help evaluate other CD-ROMs. We have also included a list of other important CD-ROM products, which provides a useful starting point for gathering information about what's available.

Chapter VI The Trial Installation is a realistic look at what's involved in a no-charge demonstration. We have pulled together the experiences of a number of libraries which have accepted trial installations and distilled those experiences into a set of considerations.

Chapter VII Network Myths and Realities tackles one of the hottest topics in the library--sharing computer

resources. Most of the information available about networks is not relevant to the real-world situations most information professionals find themselves in. We take a quick look at the strengths and weaknesses of the most popular networks found in companies, schools, and other organizations. Then we review the options for linking **PCs** and **CD-ROMS** together. The chapter concludes with a look at the **CD-ROM** network provided by Online Systems and a network solution offered by SilverPlatter. This analysis helps the reader decide whether to work with a networking company directly or **CD-ROM** vendor.

Chapter VIII Technology Outlook provides a glimpse into the future. We venture a handful of observations about what will happen in optical product technology in the next 12 to 24 months. The heart of the chapter, however, is a look at the **CD-ROM** products from three companies--one Macintosh videodisc developer, a software company, and a company creating **CD-ROMS** which combine text and graphics. Each company is inventing the future, and their innovations provide a way to get a grasp on the exciting evolutionary changes ahead.

Chapter IX Glossary is a selected list of the terms and technical concepts referred to in the text. We give working definitions to allow the reader to get a grasp on the idea selected terms convey.

Chapter X For Further Reading is not a bibliography *per se*. We list important books and articles which offer a jumping off point for a more detailed investigation of a particular topic area. The works recommended range from popular magazine articles to more technical handbooks. The list is a starting point for more **CD-ROM** re-

search.

We want to thank the many individuals who gave time and energy to make this book possible. Dilip Phadke and Nancy James of Digital Equipment Corp. offered technical insight and support throughout this project.

The Riverside Data team--Carol Galvin, Barbie Keiser, and Sharon LaRosa--engineered the structure of the book and made significant contributions to the library management, product, and strategic issues discussed in the book.

We want to express special thanks to our families and friends who gave us the time, support, and encouragement to complete this task. All of the work on the book was done in the evenings and on weekends when we struggled with the manuscript and computers.

The final result is ours, and we accept full responsibility for any errors. Since technology is constantly changing, we invite readers to send their suggestions, comments, corrections, and additions to us. We will use your feedback to refine and enhance this book. Write to us at P.O. Box 545, Sudbury, MA 01776.

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