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## CD-ROM in a Federal Scientific-Technical Library

by Laurie E. Stackpole

The Ruth H. Hooker Technical Library is a Federal library focusing on the physical sciences and engineering. Our collection and activities are directed to meeting the needs of the 1,500 scientists and engineers employed by the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) and about an equal number of contract researchers. Our collection is strong in physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, electronics and applied optics.

Our use of CD-ROM has been to support our researchers by providing enhanced access to our collection or to information that complements it. We're using CD-ROMs in two areas: in our Reference area to give users do-it-yourself search capabilities, and in our recently opened Microcomputer Software Support Center as a source for information about software and as a source for the software itself.

### CD-ROM in the Reference Area

Our first venture into the world of CD-ROM came in 1988 when we acquired H. W. Wilson's *Applied Science and Technology Index*, complete with Wilson-supplied workstation. Staff agreed that while *Applied Science and Technology Index* was not the ideal product for our users, whose needs are really more technical, it would serve as an introduction to the technology and, since it covers the more popular science journals, its use would give our users enhanced access to our collection without the need to request an online search by a reference librarian or technical information specialist. We also



liked the capability for users to go online to retrieve citations that had been added to the database since the last update of the CD. To launch this product, we marked shelves in our journal stacks alerting users that "The authors, words in titles, and subjects of citations of articles in this periodical can be searched on CD-ROM in the Reference Area. Ask a librarian. No cost."

Reaction over the past two years has been positive but low-key. Use may be relatively low because users are accustomed to asking a reference staff to run searches for them, and that way of

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doing business largely continues. To encourage use, we've hung large signs over our CD-ROM workstations that say "CD-ROM Center" and feature a replica of a disc. In addition, reference staff are primed to encourage use of **Applied Science and Technology Index** for appropriate searches. However, in the majority of cases an online search in a more appropriate database, like **INSPEC** or **Chemical Abstracts**, is what the user wants -- and needs -- and consequently what the user gets. Nor is cost -- or lack thereof -- much of an incentive, as we do not pass costs on to users for online searches unless they exceed \$50.00.

To my knowledge, we haven't had a user attempt to go online to update search results on **Wilsonline**. One reason may be that our training of users has been rather superficial; we may be expecting too much to think that users from an environment where an intermediary has been the rule will take the initiative in this regard without formal training and a lot of encouragement. A more likely reason is the orientation of the database rather than reluctance on the part of the users. Researchers seem to search **Applied Science and Technology Index** when they are initially trying to get an idea of what's available, seeking one or two introductory articles or trying to locate a specific article by a known author published within the time frame covered by the CD-ROM. By their nature, these uses do not require access to the latest information.

Where the CD-ROM has proven helpful is in serving the one user group where we are reluctant to conduct online searches routinely -- the many students, both high school and college, who spend their summers working at NRL. Our reference staff routinely direct the student clientele to the **Wilson Workstation** and report that the students like using it and are delighted with the results.

Our real success with CD-ROM in

our reference area has been with a product that is still in beta test. It's called **IPO**, which stands for **IEEE/IEE Publications Ondisc**. **IEEE** is the **Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers**, and **IEE** is the **British Institution of Electrical Engineers**, producer of the **INSPEC** database. Subjects covered are all areas of physics, electrical engineering, electronics and computers -- obviously right on-target for NRL needs. It covers not only journals, but conference proceedings published since the start of 1988. **IEEE Standards** are being added.

We are one of 12 beta test sites for this product, which resulted from a three-way agreement among the two associations mentioned and **University Microfilms International (UMI)**. We had the product installed in May 1989 and held our first user demonstrations on June 1. It was an immediate hit, and remains one of the most popular services the Library offers. In concept and design it is similar to the **UMI BPO -- Business Periodicals Ondisc**. The user enters a search, which can be a single word, a phrase or keywords in a Boolean search statement. Retrieval is displayed as a list of titles. Clicking on a title brings up a full citation with abstract from the **INSPEC** database. The user then has the option of displaying the entire article, which may reside on another disc -- there are 30 to date. The user is prompted to insert the correct disc, and a page image is displayed on the screen. The user can enlarge the image, page through the document or print the article on a laser printer. The printed copy is virtually identical to a photocopy made from the journal; all information -- equations, line drawings, graphs, even photographs -- is right there.

In a recent conversation with three **IPO** users, I asked why they chose to use this system instead of asking one of the resident technical information specialists to run a search on **Dialog**. In response, they all stressed the desire to do the

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search themselves, particularly in cases where they had not fully defined what they were looking for. One, who said he was a monthly user of the system, mentioned the "freedom to perform 'chancy' searches." Another, who estimated he had used IPO five or six times, liked being able to get started on a new topic by "using a system I can play with." The third, who said he had used the system three times and added, "I love it," chose IPO over a mediated search because "it offers the freedom to search different topics in a way that is more interactive."

This product is not on the market yet, but for scientific and technical libraries, it is something to watch for.

### CD-ROM in the Microcomputer Software Support Center

The Ruth H. Hooker Technical Library operates, as a specialized subset of its reference services, a Microcomputer Software Support Center. The functions of the Center are to provide information about software; assist users in selecting appropriate software for their applications; provide NRL employees with opportunities to see and try new microcomputer technologies and applications; and help staff in using their software and hardware effectively. The Center is located within the Library, but operates somewhat independently in its own space and with contract staff. It officially opened on September 7, 1989.

One of the first products installed in the Software Center was the **Computer Library** from Ziff Communications Co. **Computer Library** offers full-text access to 10 computer publications and abstracts articles in over 120 related communications, electronic and technical periodicals. From the beginning it has been heavily used by Center staff and users as a starting point for many types of information. Because it can be searched by product name, it is useful in finding reviews of software programs, computers and peripherals. And because

it can be searched by subject, it is equally valuable for identifying software or hardware for a particular type of application.

The other CD-ROMs in use in the Microcomputer Software Support Center serve as a source of software rather than of information or articles. The first of these software CDs put to use was the **PC-SIG Library** of public domain software for IBM-compatible computers. Although use of this CD has not been steady, there are spurts of activity, apparently generated by word-of-mouth when a new user of the Center finds out that he or she can get something free and tells co-workers about it.

The Center has recently added the NEC Intersect 35 CD player for the Apple Macintosh, which gave us the opportunity to become an "equal opportunity" software supplier. Our first Mac CD offering is the **Apple Science CD**, from Apple, containing the National Council for Supercomputing Applications -- NCSA -- public domain software. Center staff are providing the software and documentation on diskettes in exchange for an equivalent number of blanks. Demand has been heavy; this software is particularly applicable to NRL interests, and many of the scientists are Macintosh users.

The NEC player is portable, which offers some interesting possibilities, as the Library will soon begin lending Mac Portable computers for scientists to take to briefings or on travel. It will be interesting to see how long it is before NRL researchers ask for a CD player as well as a laptop, so they can take their in-office CD-ROM information sources or software with them wherever they go.

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