

# INTERNATIONAL INDEX TO FILM PERIODICALS

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## EDITOR'S REPORT ON COMPUTER DEVELOPMENTS

When Infodoc announced that they intended to give up their sub-lease in Shaftesbury Avenue I decided to investigate alternatives to our present means of producing the Index.

I spoke to the following for objective advice and guidance:

Roger Holman, National Film Archive  
Ann Ramsden, Library Technology Centre of the Polytechnic of Central London  
Selvina Penniston, Aslib Computer Consultant

Based on their suggestions I had detailed discussions (in most cases including practical demonstrations) with:

Metyclean (Olivetti M24 plus "Datamaster" software)  
Head Computers (Ferranti PC860 XT plus "Inmagic" software)  
Poppytime (package including "Index-build" software)  
Anbar Publications (user of Poppytime system)  
University of London Central Information Services ("Mirabilis" software)  
Logica (UK) Ltd. (specially tailored software)  
Cambridge Software Ltd. ("Rasmus" software)  
Bemrose Ltd. (complete data processing, microfiche and publishing service)  
RTZ Computer Services ("MicroCAIRS" software)  
Oracle (UK) Ltd. ("Oracle" software)

From these discussions it is clear that the shortcomings experienced using the Infodoc system can be overcome, and that we could enjoy with our own computer the following advantages:

1. We could fit the computer work into our own schedules during normal working hours instead of having to fit in with other people.
2. Entries with multiple headings would be input once only. At present Film titles are on a separate disk from Subject/Biographies.
3. A 20MB hard disk would provide space for the whole year's work. With the Infodoc system entries are spread over several disks, with consequent difficulties in sorting.
4. Unlimited space in all fields of the entry. At present we sometimes have to omit important information because of space limitations.
5. The directors' index and the authors' index in the annual volumes could be generated automatically. At present they have to be compiled separately which is very time-consuming and delays the appearance of the annual volume.
6. With the present system it is impossible to arrange the entries in a completely correct alphabetical sequence. The new system would make this possible - cutting out the labour required in sorting cards for the microfiche set and rearranging entries for the annual volume.
7. We would be able to use the word processing capabilities of the computer for office work and special publications. For instance we could check and update the publicity list at regular intervals, keep the periodicals register, update the subject headings lists, prepare current lists of indexed periodicals with addresses, print

the preliminary pages of the annual volumes (at present these are expensively typeset), keep the subscriber records, generate invoices etc., etc. We have to make special arrangements at the moment for any word processing, there are long delays and it is expensive. It is therefore wholly impractical for routine tasks, for which it would be most useful.

8. I would plan for the two full-time and one part-time person on our staff to train to use the computer. At present only one of us is trained which makes us vulnerable to sickness, holidays and staff changes.

#### INFODOC OPTIONS

Infodoc has offered us three options (numbered I, II and IIIa and IIIb) in order to continue their business relations with us:

I. PIP becomes a sub-tenant of Infodoc in their Islington office (price quoted by Infodoc £2240 per annum plus rent)

II. PIP sends a member of staff to work in the Islington office two days per week (price quoted £2240 p.a.)

III. Infodoc supplies basic computer facilities at the Shaftesbury Avenue office

a. equipment rented by PIP from Infodoc (price quoted £3240 p.a.)

b. equipment purchased by PIP (price quoted £5000 plus £2240 p.a.)

All these offers bring an increase in cost over the present arrangements, and in no case is there a compensating improvement in the service. PIP now pays Infodoc £1740 p.a. for the use of their computer. The cheapest offer listed above involves a payment of £2240.

Particular comments on each offer:

I. The Infodoc offices are not accessible by underground and the journey by bus takes approximately 50 minutes. The offices are on the ground floor and basement of a house which needs extensive renovation and is located in a depressed area of North East London. Personally I have my doubts whether Infodoc have the intention or the resources to rehabilitate the building to a proper standard.

II. The PIP work requirements cannot fit into a schedule of two days computer per week. In any case a full day's inputting is generally regarded as harmful to the health of the operator. Split days on the other hand would involve travelling and would be an inefficient use of staff time.

IIIa. This arrangement would be more costly and much less convenient than the existing arrangement. The equipment supplied would not include sorting or printing facilities, therefore one of our staff would have to visit Islington several times per month.

IIIb. The above objections apply plus a capital cost of £5000.

Although IIIa is undesirable I have to consider it as the only practical possibility among the Infodoc options. It has therefore been taken as a comparison in the enclosed draft budgets.

#### FEASIBILITY STUDY

The PIP Working Group has recommended a feasibility study. The only two independent experts known to us have both suggested a study period of about ten days. Their estimates are respectively c£2500 (Aslib) and c£1320 plus expenses (J. Leeves). Unfortunately neither of them is available until mid-February, by which time, if there is to be no break in our service, we ought to have a system in operation. However one of the experts, Ms Leeves who

has carried out a contract for the BFI, would be able to spend one day in early January examining our situation, and is prepared to give a brief opinion on my recommendations. The cost of this would be approximately £150.00.

CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of my investigations has been to find a suitable data processing programme. Our computer requirements can be easily satisfied by the acquisition of one of the many IBM compatible machines on the market. Keen competition in this field has resulted in the availability of fast and powerful micro-computers at very reasonable prices. I have taken the 20MB version of the Olivetti as a good example as there happens to be a favourable current offer on this machine. The hardware costs of £3600 as listed in the proposal below apply therefore whatever software system we would adopt.

Of the software systems examined there are three that would satisfy all the advantages that I have listed above. These are "Oracle", "MicroCAIRS" of RTZ Computer Services and the "Rasmus"/"Wordstar" package of Cambridge Software. Oracle (UK) Ltd. and RTZ are both Multi-national companies and their prices reflect this fact. The basic price of "Oracle" for us is £1200, but to this must be added approximately £3000 of development costs. The "MicroCAIRS" estimate (copy enclosed) is for £3300, making a total with hardware of £6900. This is an excellent system, but in our situation I do not think that its advantages outweigh the extra cost over the Cambridge Software system, whose total software implementation cost is £2140. The latter is a small provincial company, but well established and with a good reputation. The person who would install our system actually wrote the "Rasmus" programme and I would have confidence in his expertise. My recommendation therefore is to accept the following proposal. The VAT would of course be repaid to FIAF as soon as it is refunded to us by the tax authorities.

PROPOSAL

Olivetti M24, 20MB	£1995	
Printer	800	
Maintenance	355	
Materials	450	
Total hardware costs	<hr/>	£3600
Rasmus/Wordstar	990	
Installation, training, support	1150	
Total software costs	<hr/>	£2140
		<hr/>
		£5740
VAT		861
		<hr/>
		£6601
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My request therefore is for a loan of £6601.00; VAT to be paid off when it is refunded, £1740 to be paid off in 1986 and the remainder at £1000 per year.