

SOFTWARE REVIEW

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASE MANAGEMENT

A perennial concern for those involved in any kind of research is the management of the vast amount of reference materials. A capable, yet easy to use, bibliographic database management program would be an invaluable tool for research and writing. This paper will introduce some commercial programs available in this category.

The survey will focus on programs that run on the Windows 3.1 or Windows 95 platform. This limitation is not intended as a statement on the merit of the operating system, but reflects the current configuration available in the seminary's systems. The evaluation will be restricted to the programs' installation, their multilingual capabilities, and integration with a word processor.¹

The following review was conducted on a Dell 486DX2/66 with 16MB RAM running MS Chinese Windows 95. The word processing program used to handle manuscripts is MS Word for Windows 6.0 (both Chinese and English versions).

Programs Evaluated

Citation

Publisher - Nota Bene / Oberon (puck@oberon-res.com)

Available from - Nota Bene, 285 W Broadway, Suite 460, New York, NY 10013, or by calling 1 800 243 3833. USD 135.00 (99.00 with educational discount).

Version Reviewed - 7.0 Windows demo version downloaded from Oberron's FTP site (<ftp://ftp.oberon-res.com/pub/oberon/c7demo.zip>).

¹Further comparison of the programs' operation will be posted to the author's homepage (<http://www.hk.super.net/~skpoon>).

System Requirements - requires Microsoft Windows 3.1 or higher; hard disk with at least 1 megabyte of free disk space; 4 MB RAM (8 MB preferred).

Endnotes Plus

Publisher - Niles & Associates, Inc. (info@niles.com)

Available from - Niles & Associates, Inc., 800 Jones Street, Berkeley, CA. 94710 U.S.A. Phone: (510) 559-8592, Fax: (510) 559-8683. USD 299.00.

Version Reviewed - 2.0 Windows 95 demo downloaded from the publisher's FTP site (ftp://157.22.1.10/pub/niles/demos/windows/EN2WDEMO.EXE).

System Requirements - requires Windows 3.1 with Win32s installed, or Windows 95, 4MB RAM and a hard disk.

Procite

Publisher - Personal Bibliographic Software (info@pbsinc.com)

Available from - PBS, Inc., P.O. Box 4250, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, Phone: 313-996-1580, Fax: 313-996-4672. USD 345.00; or with BiblioLink II at 395.00.

Version Reviewed - 3.1.1 full version provided by PBS. Demo available from the publisher's FTP site

(ftp://ftp.pbsinc.com/pub/vendor/pbsinc/samples/winprocite/install.exe).

System Requirements - requires Microsoft Windows 3.1 or higher; hard disk with at least 8 megabytes of free disk space; 4 MB RAM (8 MB recommended).

Reference Manager

Publisher - Research Information Systems (sales@ris.risinc.com)

Available from - Research Information Systems, Camino Corporate Center, 2355 Camino Vida Roble, Carlsbad, CA 92009, Phone: (800) 722-1227 or (619) 438-5526, Fax: (619) 438-5573. USD 349.00; with "Capture" at an additional 145.00.

Version Reviewed - 7.0 Professional Edition provided by RIS. Demo available for download from RIS's FTP site (ftp://www.risinc.com/pub/refman/rm700-win.exe).

System Requirements - requires Microsoft Windows 3.1 or higher; hard disk with at least 3 megabytes of free disk space; 2 MB RAM (4 MB recommended).

Installation

All of these programs were installed easily into our test system. The installation procedures are straightforward and require minimal user input. These programs do not come with their own uninstall-utility. Therefore their removal involves both deleting their directory and erasing the corresponding configuration files from the windows directory.

Multilingual Capability

Of the four programs evaluated, only Procite is capable of handling Chinese and biblical-language fonts in its data fields. Although changing from one input font to another involves quite a number of steps, the ability to do so is essential for those whose reference material may involve titles containing Greek or Hebrew. The font selection is only limited by the number of fonts installed in the operating system.

In Endnotes Plus and Citation, we can enter Chinese characters with the Chinese versions of Windows. However, the choice of fonts for the single-byte characters is limited, no matter how many fonts are installed in the system. In other words, no Greek or Hebrew. Citation's preview box refuses to show the correct Chinese characters but can output formatted references containing these characters. Reference Manager is the weakest in this area. Although it supports the use of Greek alphabets internally, it refuses to accept any other fonts.

Integration With Word Processor

Citation supports integration with a number of Windows word processors, including WordPerfect 6.0a/6.1 or Microsoft Word 6.0a-6.0c. It is installed into the tools menu of the word processor. On the test system with only MS Word 6.0 installed, the only difference is the inability to install the tool menu. References are inserted into documents with very little effort, and the generation of bibliography is a breeze.

Endnotes Plus uses the normal copy and paste procedure to insert either a temporary reference or a formatted reference into a document. With the recently released add-ons for various word processors, one can add Endnotes functions in the tools menu to simplify work. It generates a new file after insertion of the citation information and the bibliography. However, with the demo version, it is hard to tell whether the styles supported conform to prevailing standards.

Procite installs into MS Word 6.0 as an item under the tools menu,² so that creation of document with references to the bibliographic database is very easy. One can highlight a reference key in the document and have Procite find the citation for insertion. However, one must have the document open in the word processor in order to generate its bibliography.

Reference Manager uses three ways to insert references into a document: by copying reference IDs and pasting them (manually or by using Express Paste) into the document, or by typing the reference IDs. It generates two files for each source of manuscript. One contains the text with the citation and one with a bibliography of works cited (in Word for Windows 1 format). The process of generation is very simple once the desired format is selected. One drawback is that its Turabian styles does not seem to conform to accepted standards.

Summary

All of the above programs fulfill their stated purpose as a tool for managing bibliographic database and simplifying the task of research writing. As a Chinese who works in the biblical studies area, I must give Procite a vote of approval. It fulfills my basic criteria for the ability to handle databases in a multilingual environment, though perhaps none of these programs were originally designed with this purpose in mind, together with the ability to work closely with my word processor in both the creation of the document and the generation of citations.

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²This only works for the English version of MS Word. The attempt at installing the procite.dot template into the Chinese version stalls the program and ultimately crashes Windows. Support for Wordperfect is not available at the time of testing.