The REFEREE Bibliographic Database Management Program

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The MEMRB Library and Information Centre uses a microcomputer-based, online catalogue for information retrieval. A software program called REFEREE (a bibliographic database management program written especially for libraries) is loaded on the Information Centre's PC and the bibliographic details of the book stock have been keyed in. The following is a brief description of what REFEREE can do.

FUNDAMENTALS

REFEREE is a powerful bibliographic database management program for microcomputers. With REFEREE you can store, maintain, and retrieve bibliographic records in quantities and with an ease, precision, and speed that would be impossible with a manual filing system.

REFEREE's greatest strength, compared to similar programs, is that most of the database fields have essentially no format or length restrictions. For example, the entry for author of one record may extend to 60 characters, whereas the author entry for the next record may extend to 600 characters. This flexibility is achieved at no unnecessary expense of disk space: REFEREE does not set aside 600 characters' worth of "author space" in every record simply because one record's entry requires that much space. In fact, if an author entry is left entirely blank, it takes up no disk space at all.

REFEREE is entirely menu-driven by means of a constantly changing Command Window that shows, at each moment, every command available to you. Commands accessible from the Main Menu allow you to:

• see, add, modify, and delete individual records (BROWSE, EDIT);

• send records to various output devices (LIST);

• retrieve records that meet specified criteria (SEARCH);

• sort a database on specified fields (SORT); and

• move records between databases (TRANSFER).

The output options available under LIST include

• the screen;

• a printer;

- a dBASE III file;

- a standard DOS text file; and

- a text file formatted for easy conversion to an IBM 5520 Office Automation System word-processing document.

A separate Utilities Menu gives access to additional commands that allow you to:

- remove space occupied by inactive (deleted) records (PACK);

- recreate the two index files that accompany each database (REINDEX);

- delete an entire database (REMOVE); and

- choose disk directories and video screen colours (CONFIG).

A special SYSTEM command allows you to detour into the operating system, where you may execute other programs, and then return immediately to REFEREE.

The basic REFEREE software consists of just two files (REFEREE. CFG and REFEREE. EXE). The program operates on any IBM PC, PC/XT, PC/AT, or 100% compatible unit with at least 256 K memory available to application programs.

DATABASE RECORD FIELDS

All REFEREE databases involve nine fields. Their names and required formats are summarized in the following table. The first three fields, known as the required fields, cannot be left blank and are subject to reasonably stringent format requirements. The remaining six fields can be filled with up to 99 60-character lines (per field) of information or can be left entirely blank, if you desire. Blank fields occupy no disk space.

CATALOGUE NUMBER: THE KEY FIELD

Catalogue Number is REFEREE's key field. Internally, the program uses this field to locate individual records, move them between databases, etc.

Therefore, REFEREE does not allow duplicate catalogue numbers within a database.

RECORD FIELDS

Field	Format
Catalogue Number	17 characters At leat 1 nonblank character Upper case No leading blanks No embedded blanks Unique within the database
Last Update	14 characters In format YY/MM/DD hh:mm where YY is the year (2 digits) MM is the month (2 digits) DD is the day (2 digits) hh is the hour on a 24-hour clock (2 digits) mm is the minute (digits)
Year	Four digits Within 1000-2000 range; otherwise, 0000
Authors	1 to 99 lines 60 characters per line If contains nonblank character(s): no leading blanks no embedded strings of 2 or more blanks very last character of each line must be a blank
Title	(same as Authors)
Publication Details	(same as Authors)
Identifiers	(same as Authors)
Comments	(same as Authors)
Citations	(same as Authors)

RECORD DISPLAY AND OUTPUT FORMATS

Records can be displayed, printed, and written to .TXT and .RFT files in either of two formats: database format (Figure 1) or bibliographic format (Figure 2). Note that the bibliographic format presents only four of the total nine fields (Authors, Year, Title, Publication Details) and translates a '0000' year to 'n.d.' (no date).

Figure 1. Database Format

Catalogue No   : 1435
Last Update   : 90/12/06 09:33
Year   : 1987
Authors   : Algeria. Ministry of Finance.
Title   : Statistiques du Commerce Exterieur du l'Algerie.
Publ. Details   : Algiers: Ministry of Finance.
Indentifiers   : Algeria - Trade statistics
Comments   : Annual. Library has 1975-78, 86-87
Citations   : ALG 382 A4

Figure 2. Bibliographic Format

Algeria. Ministry of Finance. (1987) Statistiques du Commerce Exterieur du l'Algerie. Algiers: Ministry of Finance.

The above is only a short description of the REFEREE software used in the MEMRB Library and Information Centre. As library software packages go, it is relatively straightforward. There are limitations, of course. For example, REFEREE does not have modules for circulation control or serials check-in. However, for MEMRB's current needs the REFEREE program is adequate and enables us to search online (using a controlled vocabulary keyword system) in a relatively efficient manner.