

Finding Products

PROFILES



Tracking Down Software

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racking down the software you need to do a particular job can be a frustrating bit of detective work if you don't know where to look for clues. How do you locate programs that meet your needs? Part of the process is defining those needs—what you want your software to do. The next step is to take advantage of research resources available to you, including public libraries and commercial online data bases. (Other resources include electronic bulletin boards, Kaypro Users' Groups, and computer or software stores. These are relatively self-explanatory, so I'll focus on the first two here.)

Defining your needs

Locating software need not be a difficult task, but it can be time consuming if you don't know exactly what you want. Define your needs and prepare a prioritized list of features you want.

Here's a short list of considerations to keep in mind.

1) Price vs. support: With low-priced software, you may not be able to get the after-sale support you need. It pays to talk to past customers to determine the level of support offered.

2) Compatibility: Does the product work with software you already have?

3) Hardware requirements (memory, operating system, disk storage): Does your system support the software?

4) Memory-resident vs. disk-based: Can you spare the amount of memory needed by a memory-resident program, and is the product compatible with other memory-resident software you use?

5) Speed vs. features: Are you willing to give up speed for increased features?

6) Menu-driven, command-driven, or combination: Menu-driven software is easier to learn, but it may seem cumbersome after you know it. Command-driven software is harder to learn but faster to use. A combination can offer the best of both worlds.

7) Flexibility

a) can you customize output?

b) does the software support your printer?

c) is the software copy protected? (Copy protection makes backups impossible.)

Once you have a clear idea of what you want your software to do, compile a list of likely candidates. The following should help get you started.

Public libraries

Public libraries should be considered a primary resource for locating software. They are the only service I know of that is professionally staffed to provide clients with *free* information in all areas, including software. They subscribe to a variety of software catalogs and directories. Some of the notable titles are listed below.

• *Data Sources: Software*, published by the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. A quarterly publication, this directory contains brief descriptions, rates, memory requirements and compatibility information. You can search by package name, application, or company. Also included are company addresses and telephone numbers.

• *The Software Catalog: Microcom-*

puters, published by Elsevier Science Publishing Company, Inc. This semi-annual catalog provides information on the availability, prices, applications, and compatibility of packages. Entries are arranged by International Standard Program Numbers (an ISPN is a unique eight-digit number assigned to software packages for identification purposes. The first five digits represent the software publisher and the last three digits the actual program).

But fear not, for it also has indices by computer system, operating system, programming language, microprocessor, subject/application and keyword/program name. Entries contain a short description of the package, its date of release, memory requirements, compatible systems, distribution medium, and other relevant information.

• *Datapro Directory of Microcomputer Software*, published by Datapro Research Corporation. This is a continuously updated publication on proprietary microcomputer software. Package descriptions, prices, compatible hardware, and vendor profiles are included.

• *The Software Encyclopedia 1985/86*, published by R.R. Bowker Company. This two-volume work contains entries for more than 22,000 packages. Its expanded application index contains more than 830 application headings, which makes it easy to locate software for very specific applications. There's also a publishers index and title index.

• *Microcomputer Marketplace 1986*, also published by R.R. Bowker Company. This annual directory lists software publishers, distributors and manufacturers of hardware and software, and other useful information. Its Business/Applications Index lists companies that publish software in any of 31 application areas.

• *The Ratings Newsletter*, pub-



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lished by Software Digest. Those of you with MS-DOS Kaypros may also want to consult this newsletter. Published ten times a year, it rates IBM-compatible software packages in a number of categories, including ease of use, startup, learning, performance, and value for money.

The publications listed above are just a few that can aid you in locating appropriate software. Check with your librarian to see if your library carries the titles mentioned and to find out what other resources are available at your library, or within your library system.

Online data bases

Commercial online data bases are another means of locating software, if you or your library has access to them. A few are listed below.

Online data bases make finding software fast. For example, if you want word processing software for a CP/M system requiring no more than 56K of memory and a price no higher than \$500, you can search an online data base and retrieve only records of packages meeting these requirements. The information you retrieve can be printed, or downloaded to disk if permitted.

Since new data bases are constantly becoming available and others are becoming defunct, I've made no attempt to list them all. However, that information can be found in *Computer-Readable Databases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook* published in Chicago by the American Library Association.

- *Business Software Database* (DIALOG). This contains data on more than 3,500 packages with business applications. Records can be retrieved by title, descriptor, hardware, operating system, program language, company, or any number of other indices, or any combination of the indices above.

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urchasing new hardware as an upgrade or enhancement to your system presents different problems than choosing software. For one thing, compatibility becomes a major factor; you must be sure the product will work with *your* system. Another key consideration is price vs. support. Good after-sale support is essential.

Once you've decided what you want, where do you find it? You can go to an electronics store for some things, but what about the uncommon or specialized piece of hardware? The directories and data bases listed below should help; check with your librarian for other sources.

- *Datapro Reports on Microcomputers*, published by Datapro Research Corporation, provides detailed coverage of microcomputer hardware products, from monitors to mass storage, as well as software and services. This looseleaf publication is updated monthly.

- *Microcomputer Marketplace*, published by R.R. Bowker Company, provides complete listings for distributors and manufacturers of hardware, software, peripherals and supplies. It also lists meetings, exhibits, magazines, newsletters, and associations.

- *Data Sources: Hardware-Data Communications*, published by the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, is billed as "the guide to products and companies: micros to mainframes, peripherals, terminals—the entire marketplace." It includes product listings, company profiles, a product index, and "at-a-glance" charts for comparing similar products.

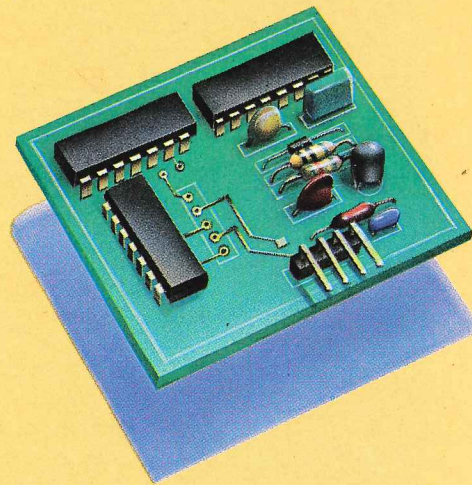
- *The Illustrated Computer Equipment Reference Catalog*, published by Bill Daniels Co, Inc., is a "computer purchasing guide" offering information on all types of computer hardware.

Online data bases

For a listing of hardware data bases, consult *Computer-Readable Databases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook* at your local library.

As mentioned in the accompanying article, *IQuest* (CompuServe) can search its own material and other information utilities' data bases for the information you require.

Other data bases you might try are *The Computer Database* and the *Microcomputer Index* on DIALOG.



Illustrations by Greg Martin

Software

Software	Desktop Utilities	Disk Conversion	Key Reconfiguration	Business Analysis/ Accounting	Home Accounting	Languages/ Compilers	Educational	Graphics/ Character Design	Games/Leisure	Text & Label Formatting	Database Managers	Word Process/ Writer's Tools	Public Domain	Utility Software
Rocky Mtn. Software Systems 1280-C Newell Ave. Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (415) 680-8378				•										
SBT Corp. 3 Harbor Dr. Sausalito, CA 94965 (415) 331-9900				•										
Second City Software P.O. Box 442 Mt. Prospect, IL 60056 (312) 577-7680								•						
Softcraft Inc. 222 State St. Madison, WI 53703 (608) 257-3300								•						
Software Research Technologies 3757 Wilshire Blvd. #211 Los Angeles, CA 90010 (213) 384-4120			•											
The Software Toolworks 14478 Glorietta Dr. Sherman Oaks, CA 91423 (818) 986-4885	•	•				•	•		•	•		•		
Spectre Technologies 22458 Ventura Blvd. Suite E Woodland Hills, CA 91364 (818) 716-1655	•	•						•						
Spite Software 4875 SW 19th Dr. Portland, OR 97201 (503) 245-8102	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•
Sunsoft Inc. 129 E. Michigan St. Marquette, MI 49855 (906) 226-3370				•										
Traveling Software 11050 Fifth Ave. NE Seattle, WA, 98125 (206) 367-8090				•										•
Westwind Computer 1690 65th St. Emeryville, CA 94608 (415) 652-3222		•												
Woodsmith Software Rt. 3 Box 550A Nashville, TN 47448 (812) 988-2137					•			•		•				
Workman & Associates 112 Marion Ave. Pasadena, CA 91106 (818) 796-4401						•						•	•	
Xpert Software 8865 Polland Ave. San Diego, CA 92123 (619) 268-0112			•							•		•		•

Hardware & Accessories

Hardware & Accessories	Hard Disks	RAM Disks	Speed Enhancements	Real Time Clocks	Modems	Keyboards	Utility Hardware	Micro Computers	Graphics Hardware	Diskette Holders	Diskettes	Printers	Printer Accessories	Power Conditioners	Templates	Cases/Covers/Stands
Keytronic Corp. P.O. Box 14687 Spokane, WA 99214 (509) 928-8000						•										
Michelle-Lynn 1701 Oakbrook Dr. Norcross, GA 30093 (404) 441-7526																•
Micro Cornucopia P.O. Box 223 Bend, OR 97709 (503) 382-5060			•				•									
Micro Interfaces Corp. 6824 NW 169th St. Miami, FL 33015 (305) 823-8088			•				•									
Microsphere Inc. P.O. Box 1221 Bend, OR 97709 (503) 388-1194		•							•							
NEC Information Systems Dept. 1610/1414 Massachusetts Ave. Boxborough, MA 01719 (800) 343-4418												•				
Okidata 532 Fellowship Rd. Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054 (800) OKIDATA												•				
Ohio Plastics 6140 Manchester Rd. Akron, OH 44319 (216) 882-6764																•
PeopleTalk Assoc. P.O. Box 863652 Plano, TX 75086 (214) 423-4634	•	•	•	•						•	•		•			
Westwind Computer 1690 65th St. Emeryville, CA 94608 (415) 652-3222	•	•					•	•								

• *MENU—The International Software Database* (DIALOG). This huge data base lists more than 55,000 packages. Records can be retrieved by title, minimum memory requirement, programming language, system, and price or price range. A number of other indices are also available to the searcher.

• *IQuest*, (CompuServe). This menu-based service accesses more than 700 publications, data bases, and indices covering business, research, news, and even entertainment. It prompts you for information on what you're looking for (accounting software, for example) and then searches *other* online services

(DIALOG, BRS, NewsNet, VU/Text, and more) and displays the results.

• *Microsearch™* (CompuServe). This contains over 20,000 abstracts of product reviews, as well as a directory of manufacturers. It's updated bi-weekly, adding some 1,000 abstracts each month. Three categories—Software Information, Hardware/Services/Accessories, and Directory of Manufacturers—are searchable by subject, micro or operating system, product name, manufacturer, date, publication, or any combination of these.

Closing comments

Being a software sleuth takes some practice and persistence. In this

industry the only constant is change. Manufacturers, especially software publishers, often change their names, addresses, phone numbers, and product lines, and they sell the rights to products to other distributors, discontinue certain disk formats, and so on with confusing frequency. All of this can complicate your search.

The information presented here should give you leads on where to begin your search and clues on how to conduct it. In addition, pages 4-8 in this catalog list computer hardware, software, and accessory manufacturers.

Kathleen Low is a librarian specializing in library automation.