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# Macintosh-assisted library orientation tour

**By Jeff Chaffin**

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*Customized computer program utilizes text, graphics, and digitized pictures in slide-show format.*

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**S**tudents at Washington College were surprised this semester to find an interesting way to learn about the library and its services. The new Miller Library Orientation Tour is a computer-assisted instruction program. Developed with the aid of a grant from the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education, this non-traditional method utilizes the simplicity and striking graphics capability of the Macintosh computer to convey library information.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the project was threefold:

1) to provide a novel way for students to be introduced to the library and its services;

2) to provide an additional opportunity for students, particularly freshmen, to interact with the Macintosh computer which is proliferating on our campus; and

3) to demonstrate to interested students and faculty what could be accomplished on a small budget with a simple presentation package (Slide Show Magician), several basic graphics packages (MacDraw and FullPaint), an inexpensive digitizer (Macvision), and the Macintosh computer.

## **Description**

The software program begins with a cinematic

zoom-in of the college seal, slowly revealing: "Washington College presents..." The black screen rises to reveal a graphic representation of the front of Miller Library which, in turn, opens to a welcome from digitized pictures of the library staff members. The first section ends with a screen offering one of three choices: a guided tour of the library, an introduction to library services, or an inquiry into "the point of it all." If no choice is made within 20 seconds, the initial section repeats itself.

Clicking on the guided tour button presents an elevator-like panel offering the choice of one of the library's three floors. Upon selection, the doors close and then open on several digitized views of the respective floor. These views then fade into a general floor plan complete with selection buttons for further library information and digitized pictures. All screens are presented through a variety of screen fades and swipes.

Clicking on the introduction to library services button provides a panel of buttons offering information and graphics on: reference assistance, bibliographic instruction, circulation, interlibrary loan, computer and database, and reserve services. Again, all screens are presented through fades and swipes, each calculated to catch the eye.

And finally, clicking on "the point of it all" button presents a visual rationale for the development of the computer-assisted program.

## Operating information

The tour uses two 800K disks, and is designed to run continuously on a 512KE Macintosh or Mac Plus with an external drive. The keyboard is not required: only the mouse is needed to interact with the program.

As stated above, the first section of the program repeats itself until someone chooses to take the guided tour, survey the services, or inquire as to "the point of it all." Should any choice be abandoned midway, the program works its way back to the repeating first section. There isn't an obvious way to exit the program short of turning the machine off and forceably ejecting the disks. One may gracefully exit the program, however, by clicking on an invisible "quit" button located in the far upper left-hand corner of the screen offering the three choices.

## Use

During freshmen orientation and the first month of classes, three Macintosh computers were placed in a heavily traveled area on the main floor of the library. Orientation leaders, as part of their overall training, were given a briefing on the Macs and left to take the tour by themselves. They responded positively. During freshman orientation, the leaders made a point of bringing their groups through the library to see the computer tour. Upperclassmen found the Mac-assisted tour when they returned to resume their studies. We estimate that by the end of the first month of classes more than 50% of the total student body (800 students) had seen the program.

One unexpected finding was the use of the program during tours given to campus visitors during the semester. Student tour guides from the Admissions Department began using the computer program to describe the library and its services to prospective students and their parents. The same result occurred during tours given to visiting academics. In fact, we were asked by several visitors for copies of the tour to take back to their respective campuses. The tour became a public relations tool as well as an instructional one.

We left the three tour computers running for the first five weeks of the Fall term, gradually eliminating them as demand increased for their conversion to word processing and other needs.

## Cost

The actual cost of developing the library orientation program was minimal since there were only software expenses. Washington College has chosen the Macintosh computer as the campus standard and subsequently provided twelve Macs for student use in the library—three of which were used for the first five weeks of the Fall semester for the orientation project. Software costs were approximately \$500 for the graphics, digitizing, and slide-show

programs. Labor costs were covered by allowing the librarian-developer to devote six weeks of regular summer employment for creating the orientation program. Video equipment used for the digitizing was borrowed from other departments on campus.

## Results

We found the Mac-assisted library orientation tour to be a valuable addition to our traditional methods for informing students of the library and its services. Students liked it because of its availability—they could interact with the computer at any hour the library was opened. They liked the feeling of individual control that the computer gave them—they decided when and how long they would stay. They also felt that their attention was more actively focused on the computer than it would be during a standard group tour. The integrated use of text, graphics, and digitized pictures was a new learning experience for them. They also liked it simply because it was fun to use.

Librarians liked it, frankly, because the students liked it. It turned out to be an excellent public relations tool for the library, both on campus and off. On campus, the tour allowed the library to be seen pioneering on the college's computer frontier, increasing its stature among students, faculty, and administration. Off campus, word of mouth led several public and academic libraries to request copies in order to benefit from our experience.

## Future

We definitely intend to use the Macintosh tour

### **Fee-based medical and health information**

The Ohio State University Health Sciences Library, Columbus, has begun a fee-based service program, Medical and Health Information (MHI), to offer research services to businesses and professional offices throughout central Ohio. The service is being marketed to individuals outside of the university community who have a need for medical and health information.

MHI offers a variety of services not limited to, but including database services, document delivery, and reference. Clients may make requests by telephone (using a toll-free 800 number), in person, by electronic bulletin board, or telefacsimile transmission. Replies are speeded by telefacsimile or courier.

The service was begun in January and continues to grow. The MHI clientele largely consists of attorneys and unserved physicians in central Ohio. OSU's Health Sciences Library is under the directorship of Elizabeth J. Sawyers.



again next year. The current version will be expanded in order to keep more accurate track of student use. At present, we are designing a complete bibliographic instruction program for use on the Macintosh. With recent technological advances, particularly in the area of multi-user file servers, we foresee in the near future the ability of anyone

on campus to access our library instruction and information programs from any terminal at any hour.

For further information about the Mac-assisted library orientation program, please contact: Jeff Chaffin, Miller Library, Washington College, Chestertown, MD 21620; (301) 778-2800. ■■

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## Give-away software: A primer

By Jim Fowler

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### *How to make use of freeware/shareware in your library.*

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With the rapid expansion of personal computer use the last few years, libraries have begun to hold and loan information in a magnetic floppy-disk format. Many have also made public-access personal computers available to their patrons. These public-use PCs in the library are a logical addition to a PC software collection, rather like providing good lighting and seating for students and faculty who want to read in the library rather than going elsewhere. Thus, libraries have tended to do for the electronic medium what is done for the paper medium.

However, magnetic disk-encoded information for a PC has many characteristics that render it different from paper and make it easy to do things that are awkward, expensive, or impossible to do with paper-based information. Two differences of particular pertinence are: 1) it is cheap, easy, and quick to copy information on a floppy disk; and 2) there is a large (relative to the extant total) body of good public-domain material available for PCs, and other uncopyrighted material is proliferating rapidly due to the "freeware/shareware" movement. These characteristics allow the library to maintain absolute file integrity by holding an ar-

chival master, and also allow the library to give away duplicate copies, written to the patron's disk, much cheaper and easier than it can loan the material.

When one further considers that college and university libraries have a higher percentage of patrons who own, work, and play with personal computers than other types of libraries do, it follows that a natural adjunct to loaning commercial software and maintaining public-access microcomputers is the acquisition of an appropriate self-service collection of public-domain and user-supported software which patrons can copy and keep. The benefits of such a collection, which is easy and inexpensive to acquire, include:

- 1) The distribution of useful software to students (and faculty) who can't afford to spend hundreds, or thousands, of dollars on commercial software, but can afford the price of a disk to copy the generic version.

- 2) The provision of access to special-interest programs that are not available in the commercial sector, but are often of great interest to the academic community.

- 3) The development of an awareness of, and ap-