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SOFTWARE REVIEW — MASTER JOURNAL EDITOR

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Master Journal Editor, published by Master Software, Inc., Route 7, Box 6, Lexington, VA 22450, (703) 464-4836. The program requires an IBM-compatible computer with at least 460 kilobytes of free memory, one megabyte of hard disk space for the program, and another megabyte per 2000 records. The program is supplied on 5.25" disks. The price of \$395 includes a limited site license permitting it to be used on up to 10 computers. During the first 90 days, the program and manuals may be returned for a full refund if unsatisfactory. A demonstration version, limited to 100 addresses and with an abbreviated manual, is available for \$20. This is applied toward the purchase price if the program is purchased within 90 days.

Master Journal Editor is a database package designed to assist scholarly journals in managing their correspondence with authors, article referees, and book reviewers. It is designed to permit routine work to be done by student assistants.

The program maintains a file of addresses of authors, referees, and reviewers, and has provision for temporary substitute addresses. It keeps track of the dates by which responses (agreeing to review; sending the completed review) are expected. "Reliability" ratings for each referee and reviewer can be added. "Fields of interest" codes can also be added to the names, and a scan by field of interest can thus be made to help identify suitable referees and reviewers. This requires first devising codes for the areas and subareas covered by a journal, and inputting the interests of each potential referee or reviewer. The manual describes how a questionnaire was sent to subscribers to obtain this information.

Master Journal Editor assumes that the user has access to a word processor with which to write letters. The procedure for preparing letters, which involves some special steps, is carefully described. Only two printers are already installed: the Hewlett-Packard LaserJet and the Epson FX80. The manual describes how to install other printers.

Form letters can be sent to any subset of the addresses in the database; defined subsets are remembered so the same selection can be used repeatedly. The program maintains a menu of seven common types of form letters: an acknowledgement letter to an author; letters of inquiry to potential referees or book reviewers; letters accompanying the sending of manuscript or book; and acknowledgements of receipt of the referee's or reviewer's report. If a global "print" command is given and the appropriate data has been entered, these will be printed automatically. As a

“date flag” controls the selection, one must always print these letters at the end of the day, or at the beginning of the following day. A log is kept of letters printed.

The program performs as described by the publisher. The documentation is thorough and well written. A review of relevant DOS commands is provided for the novice. If one reads and follows the 275-page manual, the program is relatively easy to set up and run. Time was taken to imagine problems users might have and suggest solutions. Some help screens are available while running the program.

The program has three shortcomings which potential users might want to consider. First, form letters will not reformat depending on the length of the data inserted. This means, for example, that if one writes to an author “This letter will acknowledge receipt of your article X,” the title of the article must be placed on a line by itself, as the program has no way of “wrapping” the article title if it is too long for the line on which it begins. (It is possible to export the merged letter to a file, and then reformat it with a word processor.)

Second, the program does not provide for underscoring of book titles within article titles, or for omission of underscoring when a book title is mentioned within another book title. One can write to the author:

This will acknowledge receipt of your article “The Father in Hamlet,”

or:

“The Father in ‘Hamlet’”

but not:

“The Father in *Hamlet*.”

This sets a bad example for authors.

Finally, the database cannot be customized by the user, and it has limited import and export capability. For example, it has no field for a BITNET address, and it is impossible for the user to add one. (A comment field can be used for that purpose.) One cannot add a code indicating, say, whether that person should get the Spanish- or English-language form letter, nor can codes be added for international mail rate class. The types of automatic form letters can not be changed. Many small journals have considerable overlap between subscribers and referees, but the data of Master Journal Editor can not be shared by a subscription database. Names and addresses cannot be input except by typing them in manually. One cannot export data from the program to prepare a paged annual index of articles and book reviews published. Perhaps the publisher will address these points in an upgrade.

Defining a custom database using a program such as DataPerfect or PC Filer is a considerable undertaking. It would, however, be modifiable at will, and would have far superior

import and export capability. Journals which have or can acquire programming skill might consider this option. It is not impossible that such database overlays or definitions will be offered for sale in the near future, perhaps including a badly-needed subscription database as part of the package. At present these are not available, however, and Master Journal Editor will do a good job for those journals whose needs match the features of the program.

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