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Databases

Peter Gosling

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Preface

Spreadsheets, word processors and database-management programs are the three types of software that are used by the majority of users of PCs (personal computers). *Mastering Spreadsheets* and *Mastering Word Processing* have been in print for a number of years. The set is now complete with this latest addition to the Macmillan Master Series.

Much computer time is devoted to the storage and retrieval of information now that the cost of microcomputer systems has fallen to a level where there cannot be many offices where the video screen cannot be seen. The author noticed when on a recent visit to France that hotel rooms are now being equipped with a computer terminal. This was the French Telecom 'Minitel' terminal, which provides not only a home banking and shopping facility but also a directory-enquiry service. The really significant thing about this was that it was not in an expensive hotel in Paris but in a family hotel in a small town in northern France.

Now that compact disks are being used as data-storage media (CD-ROM), it is possible for a company to purchase a list of every Post Office postcode in the United Kingdom on one small compact disk. Complete encyclopaedias can be transferred to compact disks. The technology of information retrieval is now accessible to all, and getting cheaper every year.

This addition to the Macmillan Master Series of books gives an insight into the way that data is stored, and how it can be accessed and how it can be used. The database languages used to describe the ways that a database can be handled are the very popular dBASE language devised by Ashton-Tate and the Paradox PAL language. Although it is not intended to be a book that teaches the reader how to write programs in either of these languages – there are plenty of other good books that do that – it does set out to give the feel of database manipulation and provide pointers to the ways that information can be extracted from databases. Anyone who wishes to take the subject further will, having read this book, be able to appreciate what the books and courses that teach the language in depth are talking about.

February, 1995

P.G.

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