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COMPUTER SOFTWARE REVIEWS

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## Pro-Cite for the Macintosh, Version 2.0

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Received November 6, 1992

Pro-Cite for the Macintosh (version 2.0) is a very comprehensive database management program and a bibliography maker that has been well described.<sup>1,2</sup> Quoting from the promotional material, "... upgrade offers many significant enhancements, including (3X) faster operations, larger databases (100K records), and all new documentation. Databases created with versions 1.3X can be easily converted to version 2.0".<sup>2</sup> While this reviewer did not have access to either the Pro-Search or Biblio-links modules, the updated versions currently under development will presumably perform as previously reviewed.<sup>3</sup>

A perusal of the software review literature for Pro-Cite gives a clear indication of the excellence of this product. Burke notes that "Pro-Cite (1.0) is a feature-laden program that enables one to manage bibliographic information on a Macintosh at a level of detail that exceeds any other program in its class".<sup>4</sup> Taking the perspective of scientists who need assistance in information management, not document output, Wolff evaluated four bibliographic software packages. While seeming to express a preference for Library Master, Wolff notes that "...bibliographic programs are ill-designed for patent citations. Pro-Cite is an exception because its market is 'everybody'... Pro-Cite is strong in data importing and bibliography creation but its value in handling patent citations is limited by some global database features ...".<sup>5</sup>

This reviewer initially shared the sentiments of Burke who notes that "... Bibliographic management of information is complex, so unlike earlier Mac programs such as MacWrite or MacPaint, Pro-Cite takes some time to learn and is not always intuitive in the way it functions".<sup>4</sup> However, after working through the user manual, I found that Mater's comments that "the software is easy to use, although the documentation is weak"<sup>6</sup> are no longer generally applicable.

Given this background, a small database was created and tested. A variety of workforms were used (global workform changes caused no problems), the new quick search feature (across selected fields) works well, and a variety of bibliographic styles were output, again without problems. Some minor complaints include the awkward use of arrow keys to move from one field to the next and the lack of a automatic

dup-check for selected fields when manually inserting records. Pro-Cite is obviously an excellent product, but the documentation package assumes that you will become a daily user. Despite a 32-page guided tour (in which the screen dumps did not always appear to match the text), a careful reading of the manual is required before you begin constructing a database, and a re-reading of sections is necessary as you progress in the building process.

In this regard, it almost qualifies for Quint's 80/20 standard<sup>7</sup> which states that, to be user-friendly, documentation must allow a novice user to perform 80% of the functions by expending only 20% of the time necessary to become an expert user. A suggested improvement, in this regard, would be to include a sample database project, in the documentation, that would walk a novice user through the essential features of entering, searching, and outputting records. This would allow users to get started and develop a conceptual understanding of the program without having to read the manual cover to cover.

In conclusion, one must not expect miracles. The experiences of Cheney and Jenks are well worth reading. Very specialized databases will require extra time and effort, but in the end most users will still gladly decide "to Pro-Cite" rather than "not to Pro-Cite".<sup>8</sup>

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

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