

Technical Review

Library of the Future[®] Series, Second Edition (DOS/Windows).

by Karen Lunsford*

The latest *Library of the Future*[®] on CD-ROM potentially offers literature and religion specialists, philosophers and historians an inexpensive and portable tool for analyzing approximately 950 full texts. Menu- and mouse-driven, the program allows scholars to retrieve, read and print entire texts or portions of them, and it permits scholars to conduct word searches within individual texts or across a range of texts. As a computer program, this electronic library proves to be user-friendly, flexible and fast. However, this disc falls far short of its potential promise in two areas: in statistics functions and, more importantly, in the editing of the texts themselves.

The DOS/WINDOWS version of the *Library of the Future*[®] has added several new features to increase the program's flexibility. To begin with, the program offers more options for the installation procedure. Users may install the program in DOS or in WINDOWS by following the simple instructions in a compact manual or by activating a File Manager in WINDOWS. The program allows either an automatic or a customized installation, and it installs the disc within a minute.

If the user chooses to install the program in WINDOWS, the home screen will offer a new WINDOWS command-bar as well as a "MAIN MENU" screen. The command-bar permits the user to toggle among different programs running in WINDOWS and to customize the work space. The "Edit" button on the command-bar

enables the user to copy passages from the Library and then paste them into another program's documents. Since the program may display several windows at once, a "Clear Desk-top" button removes extraneous clutter. The "Options" button calls up a menu which turns the sound on or off, asks whether to display line and paragraph numbers in the text, allows a reader to determine the rate at which the text scrolls, and asks whether to retain or to erase the search criteria after each search. Sporting a new feature as well, the "Options" menu allows the scholar to change the text's font. The command-bar also contains "Help" and "Files" buttons.

The "MAIN MENU" screen contains eleven major buttons: five to control various functions and six to define the criteria for a word search. The menu offers the "Options" button again as well as the self-explanatory "Begin Search" and "Exit" buttons. "Go To Bookmark" takes the reader to a previously marked location in a text. The "Illustrations" button is a new addition to these standard features. Clicking it yields an index of some 180 clear illustrations (charts, musical scores, anatomical diagrams, maps, art, etc.) from the texts. The user may access the illustrations by clicking a listed item on the index or by first opening the corresponding text and then clicking a toggle button there.

The search criteria buttons retain the improvement added in the second release of the *Library*: the four main criteria buttons ("Strategy," "Titles," "Authors," "Words") may be used in any order and in any combination. Each of the criteria buttons calls up a menu with further, self-explanatory toggle buttons or dialogue boxes; a "Help" button is always available. The "Strategy" function permits the scholar to select texts according to broad criteria: by category (drama, poetry, children's books, etc.) and/or by time period and/or by

* Karen Lunsford is a graduate student in the Department of English at the University of Chicago.

country. The remaining criteria buttons define more narrow search parameters. A "Summary" button lists the current set of search criteria. "Clear Strategy," a somewhat misleading name, erases all search criteria. (One caveat: the program occasionally fails to clear the "Author" selections properly.)

The most important search function, the "Words" function, offers several options; nonetheless, it has limitations. The scholar may search for individual words or for phrases and may specify a proximity criterion for multi-word searches (one word must be within x words or screens of another). The search program contains an "or" and an "and" operator; surprisingly, it lacks a "not" operator. The program will find all titles which both conform to all other search criteria and contain the selected word(s). A separate menu lists the "hits" by title and author. Unlike earlier versions of the *Library*, this version usefully allows scholars to print the "hit" menu.

To view the results of the word search, the scholar clicks a title on the "hit" menu and then clicks the "Read Results" button. The program retrieves the full text, highlights the "hits" throughout and identifies the screens which contain them. Buttons labeled "Next Hit," "Previous Hit," and "Goto Screen" simplify movement about the text. If desired, the user may print the "hit" screens, but the hardcopy does not retain the highlighting.¹

Although the program offers much, scholars will lament the lack of a statistics function. Nowhere does the program summarize the number of "hits" within a particular text or group of texts. The program does list the "screens" (pages) on which the "hits" appear in a particular text, and the scholar may thus estimate the number of "hits." However, the program does not identify screens on which the "hit" word(s) appears more than once, so the estimate is tenuous. Nor does the program allow the scholar to print a list of "hits" and where they occur in a text. In other words, the program ties the scholar to the computer monitor: to be accurate, the scholar must examine each of the "hit" screens on the computer.

In addition, scholars may regret that the program cannot directly produce concordances of texts. Computer-generated concordances especially serve analysts who wish to define an author's writing style. (For example, one author may characteristically employ more prepositions than another.) Analysts may

circumvent the lack of concordance and statistics functions by exporting text files as ASCII files to other (KWIC) programs.

Scholars will find the *Library's* textual problems more difficult to solve. The text editors fail to meet professional standards for selecting texts, documenting resources and presenting translations. While World Library, Inc. deserves praise for including historical, political, philosophical and religious texts as well as literary ones, the company does not define its principles of selection. This disc's wide range of texts will impress scholars until they attempt to produce meaningful word searches of related texts. Unlike the World Library's genre-based discs (such as *Great Poetry Classics*TM), this disc haphazardly juxtaposes texts of several genres, centuries and countries. As a result, it cannot always include sufficient texts from each genre or time period or country to place particular texts within meaningful contexts. Although scholars may range across genre, time and space in their work, and may challenge textual canons and the definitions of or dates for research fields, most scholars specialize in particular areas (for instance, Drama, Renaissance, the Eighteenth Century, Contemporary American). A series of discs which complemented standard research fields would attract a wider audience of scholars. Even an arbitrary decision to limit each disc to a single century would provide a constant criterion for comparing texts. Scholars may browse in this library, but they cannot rely upon it for extensive, comparative research.

By defining the discs by research fields or time periods, the company would remedy its quirky selections. The disc includes, for example, most of Milton's major poems, including *Paradise Lost*, and much of his prose. Yet why is *Paradise Regained* absent? Likewise, why include Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* but no novels by his equally famous contemporary, Samuel Richardson? Why an *Epithalamion* by Edmund Spenser and not a book from his *Fairie Queene*? Since the disc provides random samples to please all tastes, it loses its effectiveness as a research tool.

A more serious problem of editorial selection appears at the level of individual texts. The "electronically-enhanced" texts silently remove all textual accidentals such as italics, underlining and bold print. World Library, Inc. should reverse this unjustified editorial decision, for these changes substantially alter the texts. Accidentals convey meaning, and literary scholars who provide close readings of texts must account for changes in print style. Equally important,

¹ Tested on a Hewlett Packard LaserJet 4 (set to a LaserJet 3 to accommodate the program).

no scholar could cite such altered passages from the *Library* in a research paper. The quotations would be inaccurate and unacceptable to academic journals, and the scholar would have to refer to a printed edition to correct the errors.

The scholar would find it difficult to correct the texts because the disc does not fully identify the editions that it reproduces. This lack of documentation is a serious error. Not only does World Library, Inc. fail to respect previous editors, but the company also renders its own computer texts invalid for scholars. Scholars must be able to provide proper citations for the texts that they use.

In fact, the inaccurate information on this disc misleads users. For example, the disc indicates the original publication date for a text. The edition presented on the disc, however, often does not match the original. For instance, the disc correctly notes that Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* was originally published in 1818, but it actually presents the 1831 edition of the text. Shelley had removed, replaced and rewritten entire sections and chapters before republishing her work. Scholars must be clear about which edition they use because the two editions represent different texts.

In addition to failing to provide proper documentation, the company has failed to proofread the presented texts carefully. A spot-check of the texts finds that the title page of *Don Juan* incorrectly recasts George Gordon, Lord Byron as "George Byron." Likewise, the subtitle of Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" converts the words "A BURDEN" to "ABURDEN." A translator, E. D. A. Morshead, becomes "E.D.A. Moreshead" on the title page of *The Choephori*. And these are just the title pages.

Numerous proofreading errors occur within the texts as well. For example, Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" contains several garbled sentences: "You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat" (Screen 2). [Should be "I gave."²] "I continued, as was my in to smile in his face . . ." (Screen 2). [Should be: "I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face . . ." (1257).] "In niche, and finding an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered" (Screen 10). [Should be: "In an instant he had

reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered" (1261).] How can a program be accurate when searching texts as mangled as this one?

Moreover, some of the textual errors go beyond the issue of mere proofreading. Two editorial blunders appear in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The disc correctly documents the original publication date as 1798. However, the presented text is from the 1828 version of the poem. The more serious error occurs when the computer version silently eliminates all of the marginalia that Coleridge had added to the poem by 1817. The marginal notes are not expendable; in fact, scholars have long discussed the interplay between the commentary and the verses in this poem. Representing the marginalia may present logistical problems for a computerized text. Nonetheless, to alter a text so radically without a word of warning or justification to the user is to misrepresent that text and to be editorially unethical. Riddled with mistakes, many of the disc's texts are worthless to the scholar.

The translations, a large subset of texts, compound these problems of selection, documentation and proofreading. In many cases, the disc neglects to name the translator altogether (whose translation of *The Canterbury Tales*? Virgil's *Georgics*? Boccaccio's *Decameron*?). In other cases, the translators' names but not their dates appear on the title pages. If one investigates these names, one discovers that the company has selected many translations (including those of the religious texts) from the previous century or earlier. World Library, Inc. should declare what it means by "Library of the Future," for two schools of thought could apply to the translations.

On the one hand, many of the included translations will interest textual historians. Some of the translators – such as Charles Cotton (1630–1687) and Samuel Butler (1835–1902) – were and are well known. Furthermore, the older translations may provide contexts for earlier time periods. The translations, in short, hold intrinsic value.

On the other hand, the standards for translation shift over the centuries. While a few of the older translations remain current, most have been displaced by more recent editions. Advances in historical research, discoveries about a text's publishing history and changes in literary taste may all lead to new translations of a text. The computerized *Beowulf*, for example, does not credit the translator, but a trip to a research library reveals that William Ellery Leonard produced it circa

² Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado," *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 3, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1978) 1256. All further references from this edition will be noted parenthetically in the text.

1923. Like many translators of the time, Leonard was a serious scholar who was puzzled over the proper verse form for an alliterative epic. Old English scholars of today will groan, though, for his experimental translation introduces end-rhymes to the poem: he follows the verse form of a nursery rhyme, "Sing a Song of Six-Pence." Most modern scholars disregard his translation altogether. Editors who choose to resurrect it and who ignore the currently accepted translations should justify their decision. However, by failing to provide documentation and by failing to alert readers to the translation's age, the disc glosses over the issue.

Again, careless copy-editing plagues the translations and misleads the user. For instance, the disc lists each of Plutarch's *Lives* as separate entries and claims that John Dryden translated each essay. He did not. Dryden added his name and an essay, "The Life of Plutarch," to a collection of translations by others. Ironically, the disc omits the essay that he did write. This omission, the essays' language and their footnotes suggest that the presented texts actually come from Arthur Hugh Clough's revision of Dryden's collection.

No matter which edition served as the company's source, the computerized *Lives* have not been transcribed accurately. "The Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato" lacks the title on the title page. "CATO major" (first line in "Pelopides") and "MARCUS cato" (first line in "Marcus Cato") neglect to capitalize the persons' full names. In "Pelopides" the first sentence drops a closing quotation mark. And so on.

In short, the *Library of the Future*® disc offers a fairly good but limited computer program that contains faulty data. By no means have I discovered all of the editorial errors, but those that I have listed already compromise this product's quality. No serious scholar or research library should rely upon this disc. The

errors in this particular disc also sound a warning for the electronic text industry as a whole. In the race to produce the technology of the future, companies should remember the sound, time-honored practices of carefully selecting texts, providing accurate citations, proofreading the product and clearly justifying all major editorial decisions.

Works Cited:

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Cask of Amontillado." *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Vol. 3. Ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbot. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978. 1252-66.

Title: *Library of the Future*® Series Second Edition, for WINDOWS or DOS.

Category: CD-ROM, electronic text with search and retrieval.

System Requirements: IBM PC XT, AT, or 386 or compatible with 640K memory, hard disk drive, CD-ROM reader with CD-ROM Drivers (MS-DOS Extensions 2.0 or above).

Manual: 20-page paper "mini-manual." User's guide on the disc. Technical Support hotline.

Comments: Copyright 1993, World Library, Inc.

Company: World Library, Inc.
12914 Haster Street
Garden Grove, CA 92640
(714) 748-7197, (800) 443-0238
FAX (714) 748-7198

Price: \$299.