Inmagic users' group annual conference: 8 November 1989

This annual conference is an opportunity to hear papers both from professionals who use **Inmagic** in their workplace, and from the producers of the software. Inmagic is used in libraries mainly for bibliographic management of information.

The first speaker was **Michael Carmel** from **South West Thames Regional Library Service**. Inmagic serves four main functions, namely the creation of documents, a union list of serials, conference administration, and a statistics database. Mike's talk focussed on the **non**-bibliographic, management-orientated use of Inmagic. Using **Headset** and the thesaurus feature, the package has been used to generate statistics, lists and other conference items. Statistics calculations are possible with Inmagic using the calculations section of the report format, and this was demonstrated along with some hints on layout. The audience was assured that, although setting up report formats for statistical work is time-consuming and sometimes difficult, it is worthwhile, and modification for other applications is relatively easy.

Sue Robson described how Inmagic was used at the **National Art Library**. She illustrated the wide range of uses in the library, including a loans system, a deseridata (wanted materials) database, missing books database, books in galleries database, and an expertise database listing the specialist skills of the library staff. Some problems were outlined, and solutions were suggested by members of the audience. It was interesting to note that the library made use of Inmagic through several smaller databases, rather than one large database - this may be a point worth considering in many libraries where current use is one large database only.

Hilary Johnson, from **Redbridge Health Authority** gave an amusing talk on how to produce labels using Inmagic. In addition to giving hints on the construction of a suitable report format, Hilary advised the use of the '@NEWPAGE' command to solve the common problem of label slippage in printers.

There were two presentations from **Karen Brothers** of **Inmagic Inc** (USA). The first concerned the calculation facilities of Inmagic, and the second outlined two new software developments (**Biblio Guide** and **Search Magic**). Using the calculation field, normal arithmetical functions, running totals, constants, and the use of mathematical parentheses are all possible. The package is therefore suitable for spreadsheet-based calculations. The 'PICTURE' command can be used to standardise and tidy up figures, and report formats can be designed to print authority lists in an easy-to-read form straight from Inmagic using section C and the picture command. All these basic features of the calculation section of Inmagic were contained on a handout which was given to all delegates.

Biblio Guide and **Search Magic** are not yet available in the UK, but negotiations to market them through Head Software International are ongoing. Biblio guide works in conjunction with Inmagic software and can be used to create online catalogues, manage acquisitions, and control loans. It serves to export information from databases, and can for example, generate orders for books by pulling together

information from several databases. A demonstration disc for this package is available for customers to try out on their own data before purchase.

Search Magic is a search-only software which is designed to be simple to use for those who are not familiar with computers or Inmagic. Fields for searching and the results displayed to users are both pre-selected. There is a browse facility on the index, and an item may be pasted from the index directly into the search strategy. Records can be individually deleted from a search so that unwanted records are not printed - this is used instead of the 'NOT' command. There are a number of function and help keys for users, and the system is designed to reduce the number of key strokes necessary to complete a search. A discussion followed on the pros and cons of Search Magic and Headfast, and Karen was keen to point out the differences between the two.

Mike Hyman of **Head Software International** gave an overview of data capture techniques and a review of the Headset software. Some practical hints on data entry were touched on. The use of a temporary database where only the retrieval key is indexed can save time when sitting at the keyboard. Duplication of record field information is not yet possible with Inmagic, but Headset can carry forward duplications to the next record. Automatic generation of accession numbers and today's date are possible, and the authority files can be used to produce a thesaurus, or to provide a shorthand aid (an abbreviation is programmed to be recognised and converted to the full form, saving typing time). Keyboard macros can also reduce the number of keystrokes necessary.

Magickey is a programme still undergoing tests at present. It is a 'terminate and stay resident' package which allows cutting and pasting across modes (eg Select to Maintain to correct a mistake). One problem with the use of this type of software is that users may run into problems with software support if staff on help desks have had no previous experience of a particular combination of packages. Mike also mentioned the use of scanners, online sources and reformatting techniques for data capture. Scanners have obvious advantages, but often have high error levels. There are many online sources which can be used to download to an inhouse database, and this may be achieved in a number of ways, word processing, Headform and MARC adaptors, for example, but Mike emphasised that downloading must be conducted with reference to relevant copyright laws and licensing agreements.

Simon White from the **Ove Arup partnership** gave an outline of the ways in which Inmagic is used by this engineering consultancy. Current uses include their catalogue, loans, indexes, current contents publication, internal memos, timetables, merger information, and handbooks. Ove Arup also use Inmagic to generate an index for reference purposes for the benefits of inexperienced online searchers.

The final presentation was given by **Fiona Maktari** from the computer network supplier **Novell**. She gave an outline of the types of networks that are currently in use, covering local area networks, wide area networks which are used to link computers at an international level via telephone or satellite, bridge systems which allow computers of the same configuration to exchange information via a telephone, and gateways which can translate information to be read by computers of different design.

Networking allows information to be transferred between computers without having to physically move data, provides better security for data by the use of passwords, and enables sharing of peripherals such as printers between many users. Points to consider when buying a network will involve cost, usefulness, performance, and adaptability of a network to existing hardware. Fiona emphasised that it is often possible to network existing hardware and software.

The Inmagic conference was essentially a very practical session. All the talks presented served the common purpose, which was to illustrate how Inmagic can be used to best effect in a wide variety of library settings.

Rachel Goldstrom, Information Officer, Midwives Information and Resource Service, Bristol.

People

Sarah Pallot, formerly Senior Librarian at the King's Fund Centre has been appointed District Librarian for East Berkshire. Sarah is based at King Edward VII Hospital in Windsor.

Forthcoming events

6 Mar 1990	**Hatfield.** Setting up a CD-ROM workstation. UKOLUG Seminar, Hatfield Polytechnic. *Contact: V Winterman, 01-207 4290.*
15 Mar 1990	**London.** MHWLG visit to the Department of Health Library. *Contact: Sue Stallion, Medical Library, Marylebone Library, Marylebone Road, London, NW1. Tel: 01-798 1039.*
2-4 Apr 1990	**Brighton.** Health computing 90. *Contact: Mrs J Hayes, 3 Beech Avenue North, Worcester, W23 8PY. Tel : 0905-754268.*
4-6 Apr 1990	**Ripon.** UKOLUG State of the Art Conference. Contact: Sue Elleby, Librarian, Wilde Sapte, Queens Bridge House, 60 Upper Thames Street, London EC4. Tel: 01-236 3050.
16 May 1990	**London.** Visit to Disabled Living Foundation. *Contact: Sue Stallion (address above)*
24 May 1990	**London.** The times they are a changin'. The implications of Project 2000 for libraries in the 1990s. NIS Study Day. *Contact : Tony Shepherd, RCN Library, 20 Cavendish Square, London, W1M 0AB. Tel: 01-409 3333 or see loose-leaf insert in this newsletter.*
7-9 Sep 1990	**Edinburgh.** Evaluation and Quality of Service in Libraries. MHWLG annual conference in association with the Association of Scottish Health Science Librarians. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. *Contact; Sheila Cannel, Erskine Medical Library, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, EH8 9XE. Tel: 031-667 1011 ext 2228).*