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Vendor survey shows more small libraries

All the vendors offer their products on Windows 95/98/ME/2000 Professional operating systems for standalone applications and either NT Server or Windows 2000 Server for networked applications. Five vendors—Chancery, CASPR, COMPanion, Follett, and Kelowna—also offer the same product on Macintosh operating systems. Sagebrush, which has two products, offers one of them on Macintosh operating systems. All the vendors offer both standalone and LAN licenses.

The majority of the vendors use a proprietary database management system. Brodart's Amlib is unique in that it offers a choice of SQL Base, Microsoft SQL Server, and Oracle. Contec, Follett, and Sagebrush use FairCom; EOS International uses FoxPro; and Kelowna uses 4th Dimension.

Although some products developed for desktop Windows operating systems are now also offered on an Intel-based Windows 2000 Server, and although many vendors of Unix-based systems now offer NT Server or Windows 2000 Server as a small-system option, there continues to be differences among the vendors in the two surveys: the markets they have targeted and the comprehensiveness of the products.

The vast majority of the sales by vendors in this survey are to small libraries, especially those in schools (more than 80% of all sales) and, to a lesser extent, special libraries; the vast majority of sales by vendors in the March survey are to mid-size and large public and academic libraries (more than 80% of all sales), and to school districts that want district-wide systems. ■

Most vendors offer limited functionality

Unlike the multiuser systems market detailed in the March issue, many vendors of PC and Mac-based systems offer only a limited number of modules. Although cataloging, circulation, and patron access catalog modules are offered by all the responding vendors, not all offer acquisitions and serials control, and few offer more than seven modules. In contrast, the multiuser systems discussed in the March issue support 12 to 16 modules each. This limited number of modules makes competing with the vendors from the March survey difficult for vendors of these systems—even when these vendors offer a Windows 2000 Server option.

Although nine of the 13 responding vendors offer only software packages, this report also identifies vendors that claim to sell turnkey systems. Although the definition of turnkey includes provision of hardware, software, installation, training, and ongoing support from a single source, vendors of PC and Mac-based products do not regard installation and on-site training part of the definition because the cost of such services might put the products

See **Vendors** *on page 2*

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The March issue of Library Systems Newsletter summarized the vendors and products that use UNIX, NT Server, Windows 2000 Server, and other multiuser operating systems. This issue is devoted to the vendors of PC- and Mac-based multifunction products—those using a Windows 95/98/ME/2000 or a Macintosh operating system to support at least three modules, including cataloging, circulation, and patron access catalog. Not included are products that include only a single module, such as acquisitions, serials control, or cataloging; or two modules, such as a union database and interlibrary loan.

customer support

Is there enough support for the customer base?

TABLE 1. STAFF DEVOTED TO CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Ranking	Vendor	No. of Staff	Staff/Customer Ratio
1.	Sagebrush	110	1:149
2.	Follett	94	1:348
3.	SIRS	19	1:105
4.	EOS Int'l	18	1:92
5.	Brodart	12	1:3
6.	Inmagic	9	1:86
7.	Book Systems	8	1:678
8.	CASPR	7	n/a
9.	Contec	6	1:13
10.	Chancery	5	n/a
x.	COMPanion	n/a	
x.	Kelowna	n/a	
x.	Surpass	n/a	

PC- and Mac-based systems differ most from the multiuser, multifunction systems covered in the March issue in the area of customer support. Although some staffs are quite large, the ratio of customer support staff to installed and supported sites is much greater, generally more than 1:100. Table 1 includes not only the total number of support staff, but also the ratio when the data is available.

Competing with 100 or more other customers for the attention of a vendor's support desk is not effective. These vendors—with a few exceptions—ought to focus more attention on customer service.

Vendors *from page 1*

out of reach of many libraries. The more limited scope of offering both hardware and software without installation and on-site training is called *bundled* products. The vendors offering this option reported only 15 such sales in 2000 compared with thousands of software-only sales.

The respondents reported the signing of 11,438 new contracts (or customers) in 2000, a figure that increases to about 14,500 when you add an estimate for non-respondents and the vendors that did not want their figures published. This figure compares with 14,199 new contracts in 1998 and 13,483 in 1999. The total number of supported installations rose to 73,500 after adjusting for nonrespondents and vendors that did not wish to have their figures published. The modest increase in sales appears to be more a matter of an increase in the number of small libraries choosing to automate than an encroachment by vendors of PC and Mac-based products on the vendors selling product using UNIX and other multi-user operating systems.

As many as one-fifth of the installed systems operate on a single PC or Mac. The remainder, which are networked, generally average five users, so comparing the figures with those reported by the vendors of UNIX and other multiuser operating systems is not meaningful since these systems support an average of more than 50 users. The figures are useful in comparing the vendors discussed in this issue with one another.

Total revenues for this industry segment in English-speaking countries appear to be just over $115 million for 2000, an increase of $15 million over 1999. Follett and Sagebrush, the market leaders, reported gross sales of more than $40 million each; Contec reported sales of $2.5 million to $5 million; and Surpass reported sales of under $1 million. No other vendors revealed their revenues; but COMPanion, EOS International, and SIRS probably fall in the $5 million to $10 million range; Brodart, CASPR, and Chancery in the $2.5 million to $5 million range; and the rest under $2.5 million each. At least $10 million of the increase in sales was recorded by Follett and Sagebrush. ■

CUSTOMER BASE

New contracts concentrated in strong market segments

Table 2 lists vendors ranked according to the total number of new contracts (or customers) in 2000. Follett, Book Systems, and Sagebrush are the dominant vendors in the industry. Don't select a vendor on the basis of overall market share, though, because these three vendors sell 84% to 96% of their systems to school libraries. In contrast, Contec, EOS, and Inmagic sell more than 70% of their systems to special libraries, and Brodart sells primarily to small public libraries.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF CONTRACTS IN 2000

Ranking	Vendor	Total
1.	Follett	6,209
2.	Sagebrush	3,895
2.	Book Systems	2,635
4.	SIRS	491
5.	CASPR	407
6.	EOS Int'l	261
7	Surpass	50
8.	Brodart	35
9.	Contec	12
10.	Chancery	n/a
x.	COMPanion	n/a
x.	Inmagic	n/a
x.	Kelowna	n/a

TABLE 3. TOTAL NUMBER OF SUPPORTED INSTALLATIONS

Ranking	Vendor	No. Customers
1.	Follett	32,729
2.	Sagebrush	16,425
3.	COMPanion*	10,000+
4.	Book Systems	5,423
5.	CASPR*	5,000+
6.	SIRS	2,001
7.	EOS Int'l	1,659
8.	Inmagic	770
9.	Surpass*	500+
10.	Contec	76
11.	Brodart	35
x.	Chancery	n/a
x.	Kelowna	n/a

* Number of total customers is estimated

Healthy vendors rely on size of customer base

The size of the total customer base is difficult to determine because many purchasers of library applications software for PCs do not purchase ongoing support. The figures in Table 3, therefore, represent the number of installations that were supported by the vendor as of the end of 2000. The size of the customer base is an important criterion in vendor selection because a majority of the vendors that have been active in the industry in the past five years are no longer in business. A large customer base—one measured in the thousands—provides a company with sufficient cash flow to stay in business or to have someone purchase the company even when current sales are slow.

Who has a healthy client base?

TARGET MARKETS

Who serves my market segment?

Most of the vendors of multifunction systems using a multiuser system such as UNIX, Windows NT Server, or Windows 2000 Server target several market segments, but most vendors of PC- and Mac-based systems focus on a single market segment. A library should seek to purchase a system from a vendor that has a significant number of its customers in the library's segment because product development will generally be focused on the needs of libraries that constitute the most important market segment(s) for a vendor. Any market segment in which a vendor has fewer than 10% of its customers is a dubious choice. Table 4 shows the distribution of the customer base of each vendor.

School libraries have many small system choices. Special libraries have far fewer. They should avoid vendors that have 80% or more of their customers in the school library market segment and fewer than 10% in the special library market segment. Public libraries should consider vendors of multifunction, multiuser systems using Windows NT Server, Windows 2000 Server, or Linux, among them: epixtech and Sirsi.

TABLE 4. MARKET DISTRIBUTION OF INSTALLATIONS BY PERCENTAGE

Vendor	Academic	Public	School	Special
Book Systems	2	8	84	6
Brodart	0	89	11	0
Chancery	0	0	100	0
Contec	8	2	0	90
EOS Int'l	7	12	10	71
Follett	1	2	96	1
Inmagic	0	0	0	100
Kelowna	0	2	98	0
Sagebrush	2	6	86	6
SIRS	2	4	90	4
Surpass	5	10	80	5

Note: CASPR and COMPanion did not respond to the question because they lacked the information or did not want to reveal it.

Survey Details

Methodology

This survey uses the same methodology employed in previous years. Vendors were contacted by fax, with follow-up by e-mail, telephone, and fax as necessary. Survey queries focused on whether the product was available as a bundled product, software only, or both; the hardware platform, operating system, and database management system; the number of sales (customers or contracts, not the number of packages) during the past calendar year; the total number of installations; types of libraries served; geographic distribution of the installations; the available modules; corporate revenues; and the number of staff devoted to software maintenance and development, and customer support.

TABLE 5. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF INSTALLATIONS BY PERCENTAGE

Vendor	No. America	Europe	So. America	Asia	Rest
Book Systems	100	0	0	0	0
Brodart	100	0	0	0	0
Contec	10	25	0	65	n/a
EOS Int'l	75	13	1	10	1
Follett	99	>1	>1	>1	>1
Sagebrush	98	>1	>1	1	>1
SIRS	98	1	>1	>1	>1
Surpass	100	0	0	0	0

Note: Chancery, CASPR, COMPanion, Inmagic, and Kelowna did not respond to the question because they lacked the information or did not want to reveal it.

Which vendors target my continent?

GEOGRAPHIC market distribution

The PC- and Mac-based systems are much less widely distributed than the systems covered in the March issue on multifunction, multiuser systems using UNIX and Windows NT Server. Generally, a vendor has a better understanding of needs and provides better support where it has a significant presence. Table 5 shows the geographic distribution of installations. Asia includes Oceania, the entire insular region between Asia and America.

Almost all the vendors target the North American market. For that reason, they probably are suitable only for that market at present.

Scope

ISCI limited the survey to vendors in English-speaking countries because those vendors tend to be the only ones that sell in more than one country. It identified 24 vendors actively marketing PC or Mac-based library automation products in 2000 and sent a survey form to each. The 13 responding vendors—10 from the United States, two from Canada, and one from New Zealand—appear to account for more than 90% of the contracts awarded in North America in 2000 and more than 15% of the contracts awarded in other English-speaking countries.

Brodart, a major vendor of books, supplies and equipment for libraries, began marketing the Amlib Library Management System in mid-2000 under an exclusive license for North America from InfoVision Technologies of Australia. DS Limited is the exclusive distributor in the United Kingdom and Ireland. InfoVision Technologies did not respond to the survey, so the data on Amlib is limited to the North American market.

SYSTEMS MODULES

Who develops the most modules?

FIGURE 1. AVAILABLE MODULES

Books Systems: cataloging, circulation, inventorying, patron access catalog, interlibrary loan, Z39.50 client and server

Brodart: acquisitions, serials control, cataloging, authority control, circulation, inventorying, patron access catalog, interlibrary loan, image link, Z39.50 client and server, CPU gateway

Chancery: acquisitions (10%), serials control (10%), cataloging, authority control, circulation, course reserves, inventorying, patron access catalog, CPU gateway

CASPR: n/a

COMPanion: n/a

Contec: acquisitions, serials control, online ordering and claiming, cataloging, authority control, circulation, course reserves (5%), patron access catalog, interlibrary loan (40%), materials booking (5%), imaging (10%), Z39.50 client and server.

EOS Int'l: acquisitions (25%), serials control, cataloging, authority control, circulation, inventorying, patron access catalog, CPU gateway

Follett: cataloging, authority control (25%), circulation, inventorying, patron access catalog, Z30/50 client and server (1%)

Inmagic: acquisitions, serials control, cataloging, authority control, circulation, patron access catalog

Kelowna: acquisitions, serials control, cataloging, authority control, circulation, inventorying, patron access catalog, interlibrary loan, materials booking, CPU gateway

Sagebrush: cataloging, authority control, circulation, inventorying, course reserves, materials booking, image link, Z39.50 client and server (10%)

SIRS: acquisitions (3%), serials control (3%), cataloging, circulation, inventorying, course reserves, interlibrary loan (40%), materials booking, image link, Z39.50 client and server (11%)

Surpass: cataloging, authority control, circulation, inventorying, patron access catalog, Z39.50 client (15%)

Many modules still unavailable

Given the small development staffs and low demand by school libraries for some modules, the number of available modules is—not surprisingly—limited. Figure 1 lists the available modules by vendor, with the percentage using the module shown in parentheses when it is below 50%. Limited use of a module usually means the vendor devotes limited resources to that module's development, which usually results in less rich functionality.

Missing from a number of the systems, including the systems of the two market leaders, are acquisitions and serials control. Most also lack interlibrary loan, materials booking, and course reserves. Information and referral (community information) is not available from any of the vendors. Although all have a patron access catalog module, more than half of them report that fewer than 40% of their customers have a Web-based patron access catalog. Of particular concern is the lack of authority control in the Book Systems and SIRS products. The latter reported that authority control will be included in a future release.

Brodart's Amlib and Contec stand out as broader in functionality than the group as a whole. Both were developed to meet the needs not only of small libraries, but also of large ones. Many large sites are in Australia and New Zealand.

Competition remains strong over product development

Keeping pace in the market with fewer than 10 staff members committed to software development is difficult. The market leaders compete vigorously in functionality, with any enhancement made by one answered by the others within months. For example, COMPanion, Follett, and Sagebrush all released software to give users the ability to search a collection based on study program names such as "Accelerated Reader" and "Reading Counts" for appropriate materials within a few months of one another in 2000. However, as noted earlier, the development tends to be focused on a limited number of modules—primarily cataloging, circulation, and the patron access catalog. Table 6 gives the number of staff members devoted to software development by each vendor.

The EOS International figure is misleading because it includes staff committed to the development of other products.

TABLE 6. STAFF DEVOTED TO SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Ranking	Vendor	No. of Staff
1.	Follett	49
2.	SIRS	39
3.	Sagebrush	28
4.	Book Systems	20
5.	EOS Int'l	13
6.	Brodart	11
7.	Chancery	10
8.	Inmagic	8
9.	Contec	6
10.	CASPR	5
x.	COMPanion	n/a
x.	Kelowna	n/a
x.	Surpass	n/a

CONCLUSION

Vendor expansion across markets creates more choices for libraries

PC- and Mac-based systems were developed primarily for school libraries. For most of the last 25 years, school library automation has been undertaken at the school, rather than the district, level. An increasing number of school districts are now approaching school library automation on a district-wide basis, not only to make resource sharing easier, but also to facilitate technical services applications. Materials can be selected at each school, but order placement can be undertaken centrally; serials subscriptions can be placed centrally, but checked in at each school; and cataloging can be done centrally or at each school, but without duplication of effort. For these reasons, vendors such as DRA, epixtech, Innovative Interfaces, and Sirsi are being more and more frequently selected by school districts.

Vendors of school library systems are beginning to make inroads into the public library market, primarily because small systems based on PCs or PC-LANs are the least expensive to purchase. This trend may continue. The alternative for small public libraries is to share a mid-size or large system with one or more other libraries. That, however, involves close cooperation and some surrender of autonomy. Issues of governance are likely to keep many small libraries out of consortia, which makes them candidates for PC- or Mac-based systems.

Small special libraries face the narrowest range of choices. Vendors such as Endeavor, epixtech, and Sirsi have been signing an increasing number of mid-size and large special libaries, but they have not yet been able to consistently bring the prices of their small systems down below $65,000, a figure that appears to be what the industry calls the shudder point for special libraries—the point at which they are discouraged.

It is too early to predict which of these trends will take hold. A major change in pricing or marketing strategy by one or more major vendors of multi-user, multi-tasking systems using UNIX or NT server could tilt the outcome toward or away from PC and Mac-based systems. Grants made by state libraries may also be influential. A state library may seek to promote resource sharing either by funding linking among systems or funding the sharing of systems, each choice impacting the choices of libraries in a different way. School districts, small public libraries, and small special libraries should, therefore, monitor progress by following the professional literature, visiting convention exhibits, and talking with colleagues who have recently automated their libraries. ■

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