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Sharing CD-ROMs With PCs, VMS, and UNIX

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This article discusses CD-ROM compatibility with different operating systems. The issue is very similar to the use of data files in differing operating systems. That is, to work properly, the operating system needs to understand the structure provided.

Operating Systems

The High Sierra disk format was worked out by a diverse group of computer industry companies. The format was designed to have the least impact on largest number of operating environments. However, simply because the standard exists, does not mean all environments can mount High Sierra CD-ROMs.

Each operating system publisher needs to adapt its environment so that its OS understands the High Sierra structure. Apple did this with a Startup Document which is placed in the System Folder.

The two companies, Online Computer Library and SilverPlatter currently have MS-DOS versions of their search engines in production.

File Structure

Once the operating system understands the disk structure, the next issue is understanding the file structure. If an ASCII text file is written to a High Sierra format CD-ROM, any operating system that understands High Sierra can read the text file directly.

However, when dealing with a large collection of information, an ASCII text file is not the most efficient file structure for quickly retrieving specific information. Most companies providing information on CD-ROM format, prefer their own file format, one with an indexing method for subject matter. The software for reading a particular file format-indexing method has become known as the "search engine".

CD-ROMs in UNIX and VMS

There are two issues involved with reading these particular CD-ROMs in UNIX and VMS. The first issue concerns the adoption of the operating system to allow the mounting of a High Sierra volume. To our knowledge, DEC has not

implemented High Sierra drivers within VMS. There are too many versions of UNIX in the world for blanket statements to be valid.

The next issue concerns individual companies creating the retrieval software. Because access to the information provided by certain companies requires the company to write the retrieval software, deciding if it is reasonable to provide the software for VMS and UNIX is a decision left to the companies themselves.

One source that Apple is aware of concerning the latest information in CD-ROM industry follow is: Meckler Corp's "CD-ROM Librarian".

For more details, search the Tech Info Library under "Meckler", "Online Computer Library", and "SilverPlatter".

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