Tech Info Library

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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