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CD-ROM: Some Tips on How to Create One

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TOPIC -----

This article discusses the process for preparing data for a CD-ROM pressing. It assumes that you're looking at a moderate number of CDs (100 to 1000).

For more detailed information refer to the "Apple CD-ROM Handbook" published by Addison-Wesley, ISBN 0-201-63230-6. The handbook is a guide to planning, creating, and producing a CD-ROM.

DISCUSSION -----

It makes sense to press a CD-ROM if you have 10 megabytes or more of data and need 100 or more copies of it. CD-ROMs behave just like a locked, fast, very big floppy. If you can run your program or Hypercard stack on a locked floppy, it will run on a CD-ROM.

To press a CD-ROM, you have two options: the easy way and the way with many sophisticated options. The easy way gives you a Macintosh CD that's a copy of a hard disk. The second way gives you the Macintosh CD plus the ability to create CD-quality sound tracks. You can also create a CD in High Sierra format. High Sierra discs can be used across many operating systems.

The easy way is to put all of your data onto an ordinary Apple hard disk and send it to one of the companies listed below. They will create an image copy (an exact duplicate) of your hard disk and put that image onto CDs.

The basic costs for such a CD include a mastering charge (for creating the initial image) plus a duplication charge for each CD. The mastering charge varies (depending on how quickly you want it done), but usually starts under \$1000. The duplication charge is around \$1 to \$2.00 per CD. The average turn-around time is 5 to 10 days.

If you want faster turn-around time, you must pay additional money. Typical mastering charges for one-day turnaround start above \$2500. If you want large numbers of CDs, you'll pay less money.

Some disc-pressing companies: (See the "Apple CD-ROM Handbook" for a more complete listing of companies.)

- 3M Optical Recording
- Digital Audio Disc Corporation (DADC)
- Discovery Systems
- Philips Dupont Optical

The sophisticated way of pressing a CD-ROM demands a pre-mastering system to create a tape. The pressing plant uses this tape, rather than a disk, to create the master. Tape provides greater flexibility, because you control what goes on the tape. You need much more technical knowledge. You also need access to a pre-mastering facility. A typical fee for pre-mastering is \$250 to \$500, depending on the number of files on the disc.

There are companies that rent time on their pre-mastering system and help you with the details (for a fee). One of these is Optical Media International. Other companies will probably appear as the market matures.

If you want to press a CD that can be used on different operating systems, use the High Sierra volume format (also known by the name of its international standard, ISO 9660). If you press a CD in this format, you can read it on a Macintosh, Apple IIGS, MS-DOS machine, and so on.

If you choose the High Sierra option, plan your data carefully, so that it can be read by many machines. For example, Microsoft Excel can share files with MS-DOS's Lotus 1-2-3. Hypercard uses a proprietary format that can only be used on the Macintosh, so it's not a good choice for a High Sierra CD.

For a good overview of CD-ROM technology, read the "AppleCD SC Developer's Guide," available from APDA. To find out what's available in CD titles, see the latest issues of the following magazines: CD-ROM Review, New Media, MacWEEK, MacUser, and MACWORLD.

To locate a vendor's address and phone numbers, use vendor name as a search string.

Article Change History

12 July 1993 - Revised to include reference information and updated prices.

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