

The Acorn User Bibliography contains every reference relevant to the BBC Micro from every issue of ACORN USER since July 1982. The Bibliography is sold in PARTS, each containing an average of over 1200 references.

The Bibliography contains information on all listings of games, educational and utility programs, including later corrections, updates and enhancements; reviews of hardware, firmware, peripherals, software and books; articles of specific and general interest, such as programming techniques for beginners and the experienced, writing adventure programs, computer implementation and applications etc. It even contains ever news item and reader's letter; in fact, anything remotely related to the BBC Micro!

Each reference has 5 components- the TITLE of the reference; a DESCRIPTION of contents, including keywords and the major areas covered; title of magazine; the DATE of publication and the PAGE number. The references are stored in chronologically ordered sections, each chaining the next, and the user may specify the starting month and year.

The Bibliography offers 3 options,-

- (1) View the whole Bibliography from July 1982 onwards.
- (2) View it from a specific section, missing out earlier ones.
- (3) A choice of a one or two-string search of the Bibliography.

For the ONE-STRING SEARCH, all the references containing the string will be presented, whether it is in upper-case, lower-case or a combination of both e.g. "PRINTER", "disc", "Graphics" or "UserRAM". It can also present references from one month (e.g. Nov'85).

For the TWO-STRING SEARCH, only references containing both strings are presented e.g. "LISTING" and "WORDWISE", "PRINTER" and "REVIEW". This is obviously a most useful and versatile option with numerous possibilities for finding that reference that you knew was there somewhere, in some issue or other; for example, it can find that hint or tip that solves your programming problem, or find all those reviews you need to read before making your final choice and spending your money on hardware or software! You can find all references to a particular topic, such as robotics or interfacing. It is also ideal for cataloguing, cross-referencing and indexing your magazine collection according to subject, content, magazine and / or date.

The user can specify screen or hard copy. For SCREEN PRESENTATION, references are displayed one at a time, without 'split' words, and descriptions are left and right justified. When any key is pressed the screen clears and the next one is presented.

The printer hard copy can be global or selective for all three options listed above and references are formatted for 40, 80 or 120-columns. For example, with global printing of OPTION 3, all the sections are automatically searched and chained and only references containing the specified string(s) are printed; with selective printing, the user chooses whether each reference is to be dumped to the printer, after reading it on the screen.

The software is user-friendly. The constant on-screen information provides details of the option chosen, the strings being searched for, global / selective printing or printer off, and the month currently being searched. The Bibliography will be updated regularly.

The Acorn User Bibliography software is described in detail on the information sheet. 'BOOT' the program (i.e. press 'SHIFT' and 'BREAK') and choose your option. You then specify if a hard copy is required and whether printing is to be global or selective. Using the options is fairly straightforward, but the search option must be used with thought if it is to be effective.

Search strings can contain any alphanumeric characters. Alphabetic characters are automatically entered in uppercase but the software recognises a match whether it is in uppercase, lowercase or a combination. Generally, it is best to keep strings as short as possible (i.e. one word) and avoid plurals. Here are some examples that demonstrate the importance of choosing your search strings carefully-

- (a) You want articles on interfacing the BBC Micro; you could type in 'INTERFACING' but 'INTERFACE' would be missed. I would type in 'INTERFAC' i.e. the segment that each string has in common. There are many similar examples, so take care!
- (b) If you want 'BOOK REVIEWS', type it in as two strings- 'BOOK' and 'REVIEW'. For a review of a book by a particular author, use surname (e.g. 'SMITH') and 'BOOK'. For a particular book, author unknown, use two distinctive words from the title.
- (c) You are looking for an Epson screen dump listing. Enter two strings- 'EPSON' and 'DUMP', or 'EPSON' and 'LISTING'.
- (d) You want a review of Acornsoft's 'Rocket Raid'. Enter two strings- 'ACORN' and 'RAID', or 'ROCKET' and 'RAID'- extra spaces may have been inserted between the two words to justify the text.
- (e) Remember to search for associated strings e.g. if you are interested in 'TELESOFTWARE', it might be worth searching for 'TELETEXT', 'CEEFAX', 'PRESTEL', 'MICRONET', VIEWDATA etc.
- (f) You are searching for references to Acornsoft's word processor. Entering 'VIEW' will pick out all references containing 'REVIEW', 'VIEWSHEET', etc. One solution would be to put a space at the beginning and end of the search string, but it would then miss the word if it was at the beginning of a sentence or followed by a punctuation mark. It is best to end up with too many references and then make your own selection, rather than miss one article of critical importance! In a case such as this, a printer (and selective printing) is a real asset.
- (g) Start searches from your earliest Part, even if you are certain that the article you're seeking is fairly recent. Your memory can play tricks and your estimate may be wildly adrift! You may also find earlier (useful) references that you have completely forgotten about. If you are certain a particular reference is there, but your search string does not find it, try associated strings.

A search string can be a particular month, as these are standardised e.g. 'Jan', 'Feb', 'March', 'April', 'May', 'June', 'July', 'Aug', 'Sep', 'Oct', 'Nov', 'Dec'. The month is always followed by an apostrophe (') and the last two digits of the year. During a search, the name of the month being searched is printed above the blue information box; this is updated at the start of each magazine- hence the apparent flicker! During the loading of data, this line is blank.

I hope these tips are useful- any suggested improvements will be greatly appreciated!