1995

LDS Collectors Edition CD-ROM

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Reviewed by Larry K. Smith

The paperless office, the paperless classroom, and the paperless library are distant dreams (or nightmares). Paper has a long and venerable history, and books on paper will be with us for a very long time. Paper is cheap, portable, and durable. Text written on paper in one century is still legible the next, while computer files recorded only fifteen years ago on punch cards or 8-inch floppies are almost irretrievable. However, electronic textbases can also be very useful, and Infobases International Incorporated invites us to “enter a new era in gospel study” with its LDS Collectors Edition CD-ROM.

Infobases has published electronically, either on disk or on CD-ROM, many volumes of interest to the student of the Book of Mormon and other Latter-day Saint topics. The engine used to browse and search the infobases is the VIEWS software licensed from Folio Corporation. The Folio product can be used to search nearly any conceivable textbase, from computer documentation to President Clinton’s Health Care plan, but, “currently, Infobases

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1 Infobases International Incorporated, 305 North 500 West, Suite C, Provo, UT 84601.
2 On the Macintosh it is called VIP or VIEWS Lite; the Windows version is called Bound VIEWS.
3 Folio Corporation, 2155 North 200 West, Provo, UT 84604.
4 Folio VIEWS is the “delivery mechanism for more than 2,000 electronic titles from over 500 commercial publishers.” From a newspaper article, “Folio ‘Fuses’ Infobase with Lotus Notes,” The Daily Herald, 1 June 1995, B7.
is the number one publisher of consumer titles using the Folio search engine.\textsuperscript{5}

Competition for Infobases is furnished by Portals's WordCruncher program in the DOS world. Each engine has some advantages over the other. From WordCruncher advertisements we are told that the following features present in the WordCruncher program are absent in the Infobases program: computing an accurate word count, locating concepts that span multiple verses, linking texts purchased separately, and having compatibility with the LDS Computerized Scriptures. Product literature from Infobases emphasizes the greater number of books available, multimedia capabilities, the capacity to obtain an exact verse count, the ability to revise queries, the option of having multiple windows open, customer support, and availability on platforms other than DOS. On the Macintosh platform, ICD Corporation\textsuperscript{6} provides competition by selling similar titles with their VersaText program.

**Contents**

Infobases, Inc., sells different collections (called infobases) of computerized LDS books at different price points, but the LDS Collectors Edition CD-ROM contains them all: LDS Scriptures, LDS Gospel Writings, LDS Historical Writings, Gospel Study Aids, and the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, for a total of over 500 volumes in the 1994 edition. The CD-ROM has enough space to include in addition 280 LDS hymns in MIDI format,\textsuperscript{7} some maps and photos, the *CIA World Factbook*, a textbase of over 12,000 famous quotations and another textbase on American history. The new 1995 edition contains 804 LDS works, more than 1,000 LDS photographs and graphics, over 100 Church history and Bible maps, and 285 LDS hymns, so Infobases continues to add more to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[7] The Macintosh CD-ROM claims a MIDI sequencer is needed to play the hymns, but they are playable with SimpleText (a free text editor from Apple Computer, Inc.), among other applications.
\end{footnotes}
the CD-ROM while reducing the price. However, as of this writing, the 1995 edition is only available for the Windows platform.

A list of a few of the included volumes is impressive. In addition to the LDS scriptures themselves, other works such as the Joseph Smith Translation, the Topical Guide, and a Greek and Hebrew Study Bible enhance scripture study. Discourses of Brigham Young, Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball are included. Multivolume works such as the Journal of Discourses, Collected Discourses, Doctrines of Salvation, Comprehensive History of the Church, Documentary History of the Church, Messages of the First Presidency, Bruce R. McConkie’s Messiah series, and the Encyclopedia of Mormonism appear in their entirety.

**Hypertext, Personalization, and Search Capabilities**

Having so much information in such a small space at such a low cost is only part of the attraction of the infobase concept; what makes it useful are the hypertext and search capabilities of the software.

The idea of hypertext is that one is no longer bound to read text in a linear fashion, but that at any time one can jump to related information (e.g., definitions, commentary, further resources, multimedia), usually with the click of a mouse. Buttons labeled G, H, and E at the beginning of many verses in the standard works correspond to commentaries in the LDS Gospel Writings infobase, the LDS Historical Writings infobase, and the Encyclopedia of Mormonism infobase, respectively. By clicking on any one of the buttons, one is taken directly to a list of pertinent commentaries on that verse. Double clicking on a word in green text in the Bible takes one to the Hebrew/Greek lexicon. Some

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8 Suggested retail price for the 1994 edition was $299.95 while the 1995 Windows edition is being offered for $149.95 as a special introductory price. The DOS version still sells for $219.95 at the BYU Bookstore. FARMS offers discounts on many of the titles.

9 Dividing the $149.95 introductory price of the 1995 edition by the advertised 804 works gives a per work cost of less than 20¢.
format changes have been made in the Gospels because the Bible is a red-letter edition (to indicate the words of Jesus)—green text normally indicates links to the Hebrew/Greek lexicon; however, since Jesus’ words are in red (and therefore cannot also be green), Infobases has chosen to italicize those of Jesus’ words that link to the lexicon. Consequently, words that are normally italicized in the printed KJV New Testament are relegated to square brackets in the red-letter sections of the infobase.

An infobase library can also be personalized. Daniel D. Taggart, president of Infobases, said, “This is what we mean by ‘Enter a New Era in Gospel Study.’ Not only can users have instant access to thousands of pages of information, but they can highlight passages, create bookmarks and add their own commentary, then instantly retrieve any of it. This is something that was never before available in gospel software.” It is something that still isn’t completely available to Macintosh users (see below). When I tried to set a bookmark on my Macintosh edition, the program replied, “Insufficient security to perform operation.” But the 1995 Windows edition does have these impressive features. It allows one to attach commentary notes containing personal insights to any word or phrase in the infobase. One can create personal hypertext cross-references, unlimited bookmarks, and color-coded topical marking pens for highlighting important passages. Then one can do searches within the highlighted passages, for example.

The search capabilities of this software package are quite complete. Full Boolean searches are supported, including And, Or, Exclusive Or, and Not operators, as well as phrase searches, ordered proximity searches, unordered proximity searches, and single character and multiple character wildcards. The Folio search engine is known for its speed and the searches are impressively fast for the size of the database, considering that CD-ROM is not an inherently fast medium (drives faster than the old single-speed drive may help). A search can be revised as much as one likes, and then a window comes up with all the records containing “hits” listed. Clicking on the “Hits” button in the (configurable) Toolbelt (also called the Toolbar) puts the selected hit in its con-

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10 Jacobsen, “Business Has Only Begun.”
textual surroundings. Successive clicks on the "Hits" button toggle between the view of the list of all hits and the selected hit in context. The scope of a query can be limited to a specific collection, volume, book, or part (such as a chapter or verse). For example, if one wants to do research into the internal geography of the Book of Mormon one can enter [Level Collection/the book of mormon:]west* or east* in the query box and find that there are 63 records (verses) that contain words that start with "west" or "east" in the Book of Mormon. Entering [Level Book/molosiah:]govern* finds the record Mosiah 25:20, which contains the word governed.

In the 1995 edition one can search the whole library (CD-ROM) at once, while in the 1994 edition each infobase must be searched separately.

The Book of Mormon

Not only does the CD-ROM contain the full text of the Book of Mormon, but it also includes many commentaries, long and short, about it. These supporting works include the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies (new in the 1995 edition); Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites; An Approach to the Book of Mormon; A New Witness for Christ in America; The Prophetic Book of Mormon; Review of Books on the Book of Mormon (seven issues); Since Cumorah; and The Story of the Book of Mormon (new in the 1995 edition). Having such a collection of Book of Mormon commentary in one place should greatly facilitate Book of Mormon study. Of course, other comments about the Book of Mormon in books not specifically devoted to it can be found using the search features.

Macintosh Version

While the infobase concept borders on the revolutionary, the current implementation of the 1994 Macintosh version leaves much to be desired. Despite statements in older documentation, the software is virtually unusable on a Macintosh with only 4 MB RAM; the program really needs either more RAM or virtual memory (the newer documentation does recommend 6 MB RAM). The 1994 Macintosh version is clearly a port from the
Windows version which will leave a lot of Macintosh users unsatisfied. An incident from a call to customer support\(^{11}\) will illustrate the point. When I read

You may wish to change some of the default settings for the Toolbelt, Table of Contents, and Screen Display. To do so you must first change the status of the previews.ini file in your \windows directory to read/write. To change previews.ini to read/write, simply open the Windows file manager, click on the previews.ini file in the /windows directory. Then, pull down the File menu and click on Properties. Click on the box that is marked read only until it is blank. Close File Manager and return to the Gospel Library. You may now change the settings. . . . Click on OK to save your changes to the previews.ini file.

to the technical support person on the phone, he thought I had the wrong manual; then I told him, much to his chagrin, that I was reading from the on-line files on my Macintosh screen, and not from a manual at all!

Many features are missing from the 1994 Macintosh version (the 1995 Macintosh version is promised to be functionally equivalent to the Windows 1995 version). For example, it really made me wonder if the product is ready for market when the help files contain: “Bookmarks are not available in this edition of your MacInfobase, but will be available in a future edition,” “None of the items listed under the Customize menu are available in this edition of your MacInfobase, but will be available in a future edition,” “Highlighters [sic] are not available in this edition of your MacInfobase, but will be available in a future edition,”

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\(^{11}\) Customer support is free except for the long-distance phone call. So far two of my calls to tech support and one to sales have gone unreturned. The new Windows edition manual claims that support is also available by e-mail at techsupt@infobases.com, but my computer can’t find the infobases.com host. However, Infobases’s world-wide web page is working; the URL is http://infobases.wia.net. The infobases can be searched on-line in a similar manner to searching on the CD-ROM. Some basic services are free while a larger library is available to subscribers who pay a monthly fee.
"There are eight pull down menus at the top of the screen: File, Edit, View, Search, Layout, Customize, Window and Help. Some of the commands in these windows are not yet available in this edition of your MacInfobase, but will be in a future edition," "The following personalization and annotation features are not available in this edition of your MacInfobase, but will be available in a future edition," and "Shadow have [sic] not been implemented in this edition of your MacInfobase, but will be in a future edition." Macintosh users can therefore only partially enter the promised new era in gospel study so far.

There are a number of other features that are un-Macintosh-like, but the new version may fix most, if not all, of them. The manual is a sparse, almost insufficient,\textsuperscript{12} sixteen pages long (the manual for the 1995 Windows edition is more substantial), but extensive on-line documentation is available. The "Contents" button on the opening screen of an infobase does not perform as advertised in the manual (but luckily the "Contents" button in the Toolbar does what one would expect). Nor is there a "Topical Guide" button on the opening screen of the Standard Works infobase, as implied by the manual (the Topical Guide is available, however, in the Study Aids infobase on the same CD-ROM).

\textbf{Windows Version}

The 1995 Windows edition contains far more text in the infobase library and has many more features and capabilities than the 1994 Macintosh edition. On-line guided tours come with the new edition, and it has all the personalization features mentioned earlier.

However, a friend with Novell DOS had a few installation problems with the 1995 Windows edition. When he switched to MS-DOS all the installation problems went away, but he still described the search engine as unintuitive and unpredictable, even after it was working properly.

\textsuperscript{12} For example, the manual says nothing about the other infobases (\textit{CIA Factbook}, \textit{Quotations}, etc.) or the LDS hymns that are included on the disc.
Copying and Printing

It is a fairly easy matter to copy portions of text and paste them into a word processor. Selections can also be saved directly as separate text files from within the Infobases program. When printing a scriptural selection directly from the program, one has the choice of showing the complete reference at the beginning of each verse (record) or not at all; the way to give a reference at the beginning only of a multiverse passage is to copy the selection to a word processor and delete the references on all but the first verse by hand.

Conclusion

For years to come, it will still be more comfortable to read a book straight through on paper, but for research and study this new tool is a quantum leap forward. The quantity of text and the hypertext and search capabilities are exciting. If the 1995 Macintosh version gains parity with the Windows version when released in September 1995, then Macintosh owners will want to be LDS Collectors Edition owners also.

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13 Else this publication may have to change its name to *Review of Software on the Book of Mormon.*