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Techtrends

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A computer's operating system is the "central nervous system." This software controls what the computer system does internally. That is, it controls the flow of information into the computer, processes the data or information and then moves the data into a file stored on the magnetic disk or displayed on a workstation screen or perhaps printed.

Historically, the operating system was a proprietary system to a particular computer hardware manufacturer, e.g., IBM, Digital, Sun, HP, etc. These hardware vendors would invest tens of millions of dollars into the development and enhancement of operating systems so that the combination of hardware and operating systems would provide a measurable edge for overall system performance.

But then, customers started realizing that once they had selected a computer manufacturer that they were in effect "locked in." Or, once a customer had invested in and installed a particular computer system, it was difficult to migrate from the existing system to a newer system. Thus, the movement towards "open" systems that are based on standards.

There are two types of standards: "consensus" standards that are created by a standards body, e.g., the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) – which creates and maintains standards for libraries (the Z39.xx standards) and "industry" standards. Industry standards are established by one or more vendors and for a variety of reasons, e.g., marketplace dominance, soon become a de facto standard in the marketplace.

Today, the two operating systems that have become standard are:

- Windows NT from Microsoft
- UNIX (developed by Bell Labs in the early 1980's)

Unfortunately, the computer industry has not been able to come to agreement with regards to a standard version of UNIX and so there are many flavors of this popular operating system.

Seemingly, small and medium-sized organizations seem to be choosing Windows NT as the operating system of choice. And for larger applications, UNIX still remains a popular choice.

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block out the vast majority of the world's information, allowing into the classroom only very small bits of information at any given time." This approach enables people to absorb data, integrate it into a theory, and create meaning—all the processes that Postman argues are inhibited by the information glut.

Clearly, the present problem in our society is not a lack of information. As the Internet is demonstrating, the new information problem is how to fill drinking glasses with a firehose. The question is: How can we as librarians help our patrons get relevant, manageable chunks of the information universe?

In Christian education, our allies in this effort may actually be the administrators at our institutions who fail to fund libraries adequately. Review my opening paragraph. Is it possible that the size of our library budgets (small) is not a demonstration of the fact that our institutional administrators do not appreciate libraries, but that they have understood the concept of "data smog" better than librarians? That is, they have done us (and the students who depend on our learning resources) a favor by limiting budgets to a *very* reasonable amount.

There are some things we can do to accentuate this more positive perspective. We probably need not go as far as one pastor once suggested to me—that one Book in a Christian library is enough—but some additional weeding of our collections couldn't hurt. Junk collects, and it tends to obscure items of value. The information glut, according to Postman and Shenk, does the same thing. Once we have finished the weeding, we can request lower budgets for learning resources. After our administrators pick themselves up from the floor, we can explain our reasoning, noting that the lower request applies only to learning resources. We still need higher salaries.

If you have ever wished that you had seven bazillion books in your library, that EBSCO would covet your periodical collection, that every important electronic journal and database had a link from your Web page, envy no longer. Your financial poverty will ultimately produce intellectual and spiritual clarity.

(WEBSIGHT, continued from page 23)

The CHARTULARY is a repository of primary sources. The ARCHIVES is currently a very small set of full-text documents. The GLOSSARY is quite extensive and is in alphabetical order. The IMAGE LIBRARY is organized according to the cataloging standards of the Visual Resources Association. There is a pull down screen on the search engine for Work Type. However, in some of the categories there are no images. The images themselves are not explained. This is a serious drawback. The only information given is the Work Type and the image number. Since no other information was given, the author could not check the indexing done relative to the images. This site is significant and is developing. However, some important indexing needs to be accomplished particularly if the site is to aid non-experienced researchers in the areas related to the database. According to Marilyn Dunn, Managing Editor and a library director, there exists a large depository of data , both bibliographic and images, that are awaiting the programming necessary to get into the database.