

COMPUTER SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENTS

The friendlier the interactive video system the more complex are the computer software requirements to access the information. The sheer quantity of data on the Domesday Discs involved significant advances in the software—the intelligence at the heart of the Domesday system. Most of this software has been written for the BBC by Logica.

Logica was involved in Domesday from the project's inception in 1984, providing two teams of computer experts.

The first team worked closely with the BBC, providing software and the consultancy to make possible the assembly of the data, and to prepare for the mastering of the videodiscs. This involved the design and implementation of a database system to keep track of the volunteer effort; translation and indexing of the information from the wide variety of data sources to a

common format; and solving the new problems implied by the unique mix of analogue and digital material—pictures and data.

The second team implemented the BBC's specifications for the retrieval software. The ease with which the user can move around within Domesday—freely changing from map to photograph to text to data display—is one of the systems' greatest strengths. On the technical level, the software is written in a highly structured and modular manner, to make it as reusable and transportable as possible.

Agreement has been reached between the BBC and Logica regarding continued cooperation in the use of Advanced Interactive Video technology (AIV). A licence grants to Logica the exclusive right to supply Domesday software ported onto other computers. Under discussion is a second licence allowing Logica to develop systems for other uses, employing the techniques and technologies developed for Domesday. Such systems might range from special processing of the data within Domesday to the production of new publications based on the technology.

Supplementary software on floppy disc for a range of specialised applications will be available from BBC Enterprises. For example, Domesday User Data software will allow users to include data of their own on floppy disc, and then examine it using the standard retrieval software and map displays. Data can be entered manually or direct from another computer system. The Domesday User Data software will be published in the spring of 1987.

The BBC is naturally very keen that more discs are produced using the AIV technology. The pre-mastering software that has been developed for the Domesday Discs should be extremely useful to vidoedisc producers and the BBC would be pleased to discuss the use of this software with them.



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