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### Software Review

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## SOFTWARE REVIEW

**1992 GEN GUIDE TO BIOTECHNOLOGY COMPANIES**, Genetic Engineering News, Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., 1651 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10128, USA, US\$95.00 (desktop edition), US\$400.00 (Computer Disk).

This data collection, called Genguide.92, contains detailed information for 814 companies from 28 countries involved in the biotechnology industry. Included are "biotech" organizations, i.e., those who are directly involved in developing and producing diagnostic, therapeutic, etc. products resulting from biotechnology research, as well as those who advise and supply "biotech" organizations with chemicals, instrumentation, separation/purification services and equipment and other materials used in the conduct of their business. The present review is for the computer disk version only. The printed desktop edition was not examined; it was not supplied with the disk.

The information given for each organization is similar to that which has previously been published in Genetic Engineering News and has served as the standard reference guide for many years. It will, no doubt, be at least as useful as it has always been in these earlier published editions. In addition to name, address and phone/FAX numbers, each record includes, where available, date founded; names of key personnel (e.g., President/CEO, Research Director, Marketing Director, Regulatory Affairs Director and Purchasing Manager); ownership; number of employees; business focus; primary business; revenues, assets and budget dollars; joint ventures; R&D agreements; marketing agreements; licensing agreements; funding sources; technologies; markets; major products; products under development; additional facilities; miscellaneous notes. The in-depth information given for each organization would be difficult or impossible to assemble from other sources. Although the majority of companies are in the U.S., a significant number of foreign firms are also included.

Technologies given in the database include Recombinant DNA; Fermentation; Purification/Separation; Hybridoma/Cell Fusion; Cell/Tissue Culture; Large-Scale Purification; Process Monitoring Control; Enzymology; Bioprocess; Sequencing; Synthesis; Drug Design; Antisense; Drug Delivery; Transgenics; Gene Therapy.

The disk file format is delimited ASCII, which can be converted for use with many database and spreadsheet programs. Conversion can be as simple as setting up a database file, then copying the information into the database, or it can become a difficult, if not impossible task, with databases that have limited field lengths, e.g. the popular dBase in its many versions. This reviewer used dBase III+ by making the very long fields (some are 640 characters long) "memo" fields which can accommodate information of any length. In the delimited format used with Genguide.92, each field of information is enclosed in quotes and separated from adjacent fields by a comma. This is a standard delimited format; it should be compatible with many readily available databases.

Searches, after indexing, were straight forward. It was a simple matter to search the database for names of key personnel, companies with specific product types or technologies, size, revenues, location, combinations of these with other details such as location, size, revenues, and much, much more. This is, of course, the value and advantage of having a disk rather than a simple printed listing. In fact, its like having a listing with an infinite number of cross references. One can identify business opportunities, compile statistics on competitors, find key personnel, evaluate markets, analyze research and product trends, etc.

In addition to the primary file, GENGUIDE.92, described above, the disk contains four additional files which contain, respectively, bioprocess engineering firms, peptide companies, biotech consultants and biotech recruiters. File formats are all delimited ASCII, but the fields are different for each; a separate database file must be set up for each database.

A disadvantage of this database, as it is supplied in a diskette, is that a suitable database program is not included which will accommodate very long fields of information. The use of "memo" fields, with dBase III+, for example, limits the use of the information because "memo" fields cannot be searched for detailed information as can other types of dBase fields; and it is the ability to search that makes the disk version of Genguide.92 so useful and valuable.

Nevertheless, the disk version of Genguide.92 is highly recommended as a standard, authoritative reference for all who work in or service the "biotech" industry. It brings together comprehensive information in a format that can be readily used to make intelligent, timely scientific and business decisions.

Reviewed by  
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