



computer corner

The NPS Pacific NW Regional Library has made an important advancement into the world of laser technology and at the same time has increased local residents' access to library materials through the region, according to Regional Librarian Ellen Traxel. The library now has a new product called **LaserCat**, which uses optical disks with information on books, magazines and other items held by more than 240 libraries from Alaska to Arizona.

LaserCat makes use of a technology known as CD-ROM, which stands for Compact Disc Read-Only Memory. The discs, similar to compact discs now popular for music recordings, represent an advanced computer storage technology that uses laser light to read large amounts of information stored on a small disc. One CD-ROM disc holds 550 million characters of information, equivalent to the information stored on 1,500 computer floppy disks. This is equal to more than 700 issues of a typical daily newspaper.

"This new product gives our library access to one of the most extensive collections of computerized library holdings in the Western United States: The Western Library Network (WLN) database," Traxel said.

WLN, a division of the Washington State Library, provides computer services to libraries. **LaserCat**, which was developed at WLN, features the equivalent of two million catalog cards on CD-ROM. Traxel calls this "inexpensive and easy-to-use tool," a benefit for National park staff wishing to compile bibliographies and catalog park library collections.

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A 360K floppy disk that carries seven years of *Park Science* indexing by title, author, subject matter, park, region, and position in *Park Science* is being readied by Pacific Northwest Region Librarian Traxel and Assistant Librarian Richard Arokbaar.

Written in dBase III+, the disks will come with a menu-driven system for accessing the information.

Inquiries about (or suggestions for) this service should be addressed to Ellen Traxel, NPS Pacific Northwest Region, 83 S. King St., Seattle, WA 98104, or phoned to (206) 442-5203 (FTS 399-5203).