

3X5 COMPUTER

by Chase Klinesteker SWAM, Mar-April, 1985



3X5 card file notes for each species kept

2016 Note: This article was written B.I. (Before the Internet), but the method is still effective for research.

THE PROBLEM

For a long time I have longed for a fast and accurate information retrieval system on all aspects of my tropical fish hobby, especially my fish breeding. It seems that every time that I need thorough information on a

species of fish, I have to page through 4 or 5 encyclopedia reference books to get all the information I need on breeding conditions, water temperature, temperament, food, and hatching and raising of the fry. No one article seems to have all the needed information, so I have to search for it and read several articles. The frustrating part is that at one time or another, I have probably read the information or the same articles before! Of course, this is no sign of slipping mental function, but rather the ever increasing multitude of details that I must mentally process.

INFORMATION STORAGE

After a few episodes of short circuiting my cranium computer, I decided there must be a better way of information storage. Letting my mind wander, I envisaged a 1,000 K computer, monitor, and disk drive with all the information ever written on each species stored in it (circa. 1985!). The press of a button would bring forth the information I desired, and it would print out this information on a piece of paper for use at my leisure. Paradise envisaged! Then my mind wandered further and reality began to set in. I would need a computer that would handle all this data, plus the extras that go with it, a not too small project and cost. Then I would have to gather the mountains of information and enter it into the proper place, something I know nothing about! My one finger typing speed of ten words per minute would lengthen this process considerably!

MY SOLUTION

At this point my bubble burst. I would have to find an information storage and retrieval system that was a little more down to earth! A 3X5 card file system seemed to be the answer for me. Necessary skill number one is the ability to write small, something which I have perfected over the years to the dismay of those who try to read my writing. That, along with my illegible writing, provides a tamper-proof security system for my 3X5 computer that has never been broken! The major cost of my 3X5 computer is in the hardware (file box) and software (stacks of 3X5 cards). A price comparison revealed that the 3X5 computer would indeed be more reasonable.

ENTER INFO

Entering information about a subject or species is fairly simple. Begin on the lined side and enter the species name or subject matter on the upper left top line. A fishes' scientific name follows its common name. In the upper right hand corner, put the source and date of the information. Using a fine ballpoint pen, summarize what you have read, and only write down the pertinent points to keeping and breeding that fish. Use abbreviations and shortened words whenever possible. When done, draw a line at the left hand margin so the next time you add information to that card you can identify the source and date. You can readily purchase dividers with tabs for the major species or subject categories. Fish categories I now have include: tetras, catfish, barbs, cichlids, killiefish, livebearers, danios, bubble nest builders, and miscellaneous fish. Other categories include: foods, diseases, plants, filters, and miscellaneous. You can add or remove categories very easily by putting the proper file cards in the new category or moving them to another section. Continue adding information by writing on the back of the card, and if more than one card becomes necessary, number them at the top and staple them together. More difficult species may have 6 or 7 information cards stapled together.

ADDING MORE INFO

As written information on a fish or subject increases from reading, club programs, and fishroom experience, I pull out those cards on the species I am keeping currently, so I can quickly add information that I learn from keeping them. I generally carry blank 3X5 cards and a pen around most of the time so I can quickly jot down notes when talking to club members or at a club program. This beats starting up a computer and maneuvering through software just to add a fact or two. Our clubs' programs are especially easy. Just enter the subject on a new card and take notes as the program progresses. Your card is then ready to file. Just try typing that information into a computer as a program progresses and see how far you get! I guarantee you will forget 90-95% of the information from most of our excellent programs within a few hours if you don't immediately record it in some way. Just writing down the facts will help you remember them, but the maximum help will be reviewing your notes several months down the road when most of it is completely forgotten.

That's about it. The 3X5 computer can store concentrated information in a small space for easy organization and retrieval. It has excellent flexibility and doesn't even have to be plugged in!

P. S. It is now 2016 and I use the Internet considerably for research, although I still add the information that I get there onto the 3X5 cards. I feel that Books, magazines, and published reference materials are still the most accurate sources for information. Each card contains short, concise information on a given species of fish that can be quickly reviewed. My "3X5 computer" is still relevant and being added to!!