
TUTOR language documentation

TUTOR was the main language used to write instructional materials for the mainframe-oriented PLATO computer-based instructional system. The twelve editions of the Summary of TUTOR Commands and System Variables served as a printed coding reference for experienced PLATO instructional programmers. During the ten years covered by the series, the TUTOR language became increasingly sophisticated as it took advantage of technological advances in the system and terminals. The report series itself benefitted from these advances. The 86 pages of the first edition were typed by a secretary. By 1977, the sixth edition was mostly edited and printed from a PLATO terminal used as a word processor. The series ended in 1984 with the 208-page twelfth edition. After 1984, on-line reference resources had been developed enough to carry the full burden.


μTUTOR language documentation

As the cost of computer processor chips and memory decreased, CERL began developing proprietary “smart” terminals that could operate on a mainframe system as well as on stand-alone or locally networked student terminals. The μTUTOR language was developed to program instructional material for such terminals. Like the TUTOR Summary reports, the two editions that summarized the μTUTOR language were intended as production aids for experienced instructional designers.


Advanced Student Terminal

The Advanced Student Terminal was the last “smart” student terminal designed by CERL staff to permit full exploitation of the potential of computer based instruction.


Digitized versions of CERL Reports

Also donated is a Compact Disc containing PDF (Portable Document Format) versions of the CERL reports which have undergone optical character recognition to permit easy searches for text within each file.

Included are the 15 reports listed above, plus:

This report was the first formal documentation of the TUTOR language.

Describes a utility that could be quickly added to an existing instructional lesson. The utility added the ability to monitor progress of all students using that material in real time from a single PLATO terminal and the ability to store time and performance data on individual students.

An update of a report first produced in March 1970 describing the first commercially produced student terminal for PLATO which was designed by CERL staff under Jack Stifle.

A description of the terminal designed by CERL for the expanded PLATO V system. It contained an Intel 8080 microprocessor which enabled it to run local programs as well as operating as a terminal on a centralized system.