

Use of Training Materials

This manual provides the MERLIN operator with the information required to safely perform the operational tasks associated with MERLIN. The training course materials are intended for training purposes only. They have been prepared in conformance with existing USPS policies and standards and do not represent the establishment of new regulations or policies. During normal operations, operators and supervisors and maintenance technicians should refer to standard USPS operating procedures and procedures provided with the equipment.

MERLIN's Background

The USPS gives discount rates to businesses that send out large quantities of mail if they conform to specific regulations regarding presorting, barcoding, addressing, mail size, and mail weight. When mailings are prepared to USPS standards, the USPS's processing and distribution costs are greatly reduced. In order to verify that a mailing meets discount requirements, the rates and postage computations shown on postage statements need to be verified against the quality of the mail preparation. MERLIN was designed to perform over 400 verification checks of the mailing as compared to the specifications described in the Domestic Mail Manual.

MERLIN's Role in the BMEU/DMU

MERLIN automates the USPS mail verification process for business mailings. Operationally, the machine provides data gathering capabilities for First Class and Standard, Periodicals, automated and non-automated mail. It also verifies flats mailings and flat or letter sized periodicals.

Previously, when a mailing was brought into the BMEU, the clerk manually verified the mail for eligibility of contents, markings and endorsements, sortation, and postage payment. MERLIN replaces the need to perform most manual verification checks.

When mail is brought into the BMEU/DMU, the clerk checks the mailpieces and supporting documentation. A random sample is then run on MERLIN, which will perform all applicable verifications. MERLIN has the capability of checking the accuracy of many more mailing characteristics than was previously done by hand.

Verification reports are automatically generated at the end of a job and can be printed at the operator's command. The information from the mailing runs will be stored electronically for historical data and can be accessed at any time. MERLIN stores reports from each run for 30 days, after which they are automatically purged.

Machine Operation

The Machine Operation Module describes MERLIN operating procedures. Heavy emphasis is placed on hands-on training during this module. Each student will have the opportunity to perform and practice the normal operating procedures. Students will also be required to demonstrate the operating procedures to the instructor. The Machine Operation Module is divided into the following sections:

- Normal System Startup/Shutdown
- Entering mail account information into the evaluation screens to run mail through MERLIN
- Prepping Mail
- Loading Mail
- Emergency System Shutdown
- Jam Clearance
- Printing MERLIN Reports

Report Generation and Analysis

The Report Generation and Analysis section describes all operational reports and the actions that are involved in printing them. The Report Generation and Analysis Module covers the following reports:

- Presort Verification Report (PS 2866X)
- Sortation Exceptions Report
- First Class Metered Mail-Short Paid Mail Sampling Worksheet (PS 6116X)
- Short Paid Exceptions
- Meter Date Exceptions
- Payment Method by Ounce Category Summary
- Summary Verification
- End of Job
- Overwrite Summary
- POSTNET Barcode Readability
- Address Accuracy
- POSTNET Adjustment Worksheet
- Mailpiece Diagnostics
- Mailpiece Characteristics
- Business Mail Acceptance Worksheet (PS 8040X)
- Business Mail Exceptions

MERLIN's Function

MERLIN (Mailing Evaluation and Readability Lookup Instrument) is an efficient and accurate tool used for automating the USPS mail verification process for business mailings. MERLIN runs mail at two speeds. The throughput for flats and cards is 4000 pieces per hour, and the throughput for letters is 6000 pieces per hour. MERLIN performs the following tasks:

- Evaluates tray tags to identify inconsistencies in the mailpieces being processed.
- Weighs each mailpiece.
- Obtains a thickness measurement of every mailpiece, to determine if it complies with the standards set forth in the DMM (Domestic Mail Manual).
- Measures the height and length of each mailpiece.
- Separates one mailpiece at a time from the mail in the Feeder magazine.
- Counts each mailpiece.
- Tracks individual mailpieces as they progress through the machine.
- Prints an ID number on each mailpiece.
- Captures an image of each mailpiece for presort, address, barcode and indicia analysis.
- Processes mailing data.
- Prints end-of-run reports.
- Captures an image of each mailpiece.

MERLIN collects the following information from each captured image:

- Payment Method (Pre-canceled Stamp, Permit, Meter, IBIP) Value
- Meter Plate Number and Date
- Address Recognition and Numeric ZIP Code
- POSTNET Barcode Decode and Quality Analysis
- PLANET Barcode Decode and Quality Analysis
- Endorsement Line Recognition
- Height
- Length
- Package Label Recognition

This data, as well as the information from the postage statement, is analyzed for conformance to USPS regulations. Figure 1-1 provides a functional overview of MERLIN's capabilities.

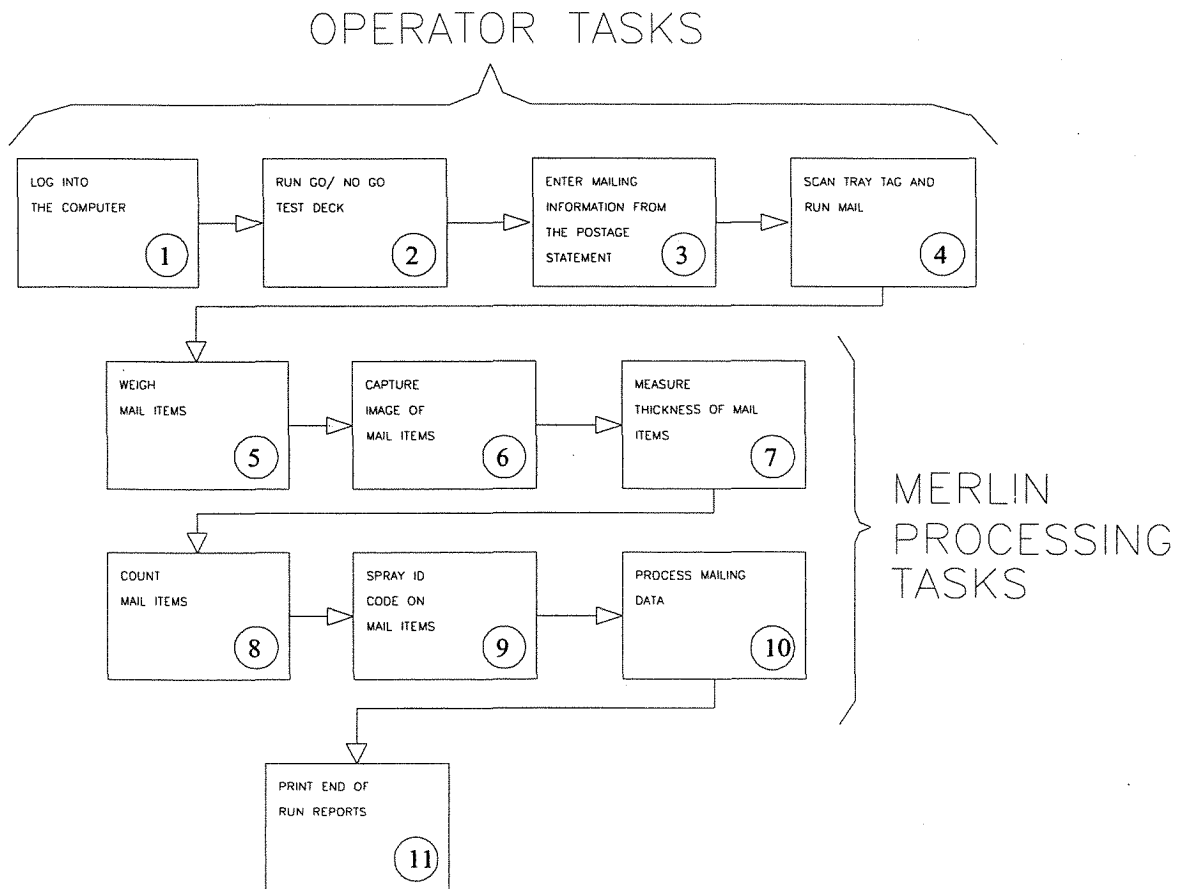


Figure 1-1
MERLIN Functional Overview