Database Directories: The Rest

By Carol Tenopir

A LOOK through *Books in Print* or at the computer books counter of any major bookstore will reveal a growing number of database directories. There are now over 30 of these directories, which range from one-subject specialty directories, to guides and directories of popular databases for the home computer user, to comprehensive directories for online professionals.

In last month's column I concentrated on the three comprehensive directories that are now all available online through major online search services (Williams, *Computer-Readable Databases*; Cuadra Associates Inc., *Directory of Online Databases*; and *Data Base Directory*). Online and in print these directories are the most complete and best resources for the information professional.

This month's column will look at some of the other database directories on the market. At the end of the column is a list of selected database directories.

The Gale *Encyclopedia*

The new 1985-86 edition of the well-known *Encyclopedia of Information Systems and Services* provides a valuable and up-to-date reference work for databases, although it is not strictly a database directory. The *Encyclopedia* includes descriptive information about all types of "information providers"—organizations that provide computer-readable information. Included are libraries, database producers, online vendors, consultants, associations, etc.

Unlike most comprehensive database directories, the *Encyclopedia* is arranged by the organization that produces the information, rather than by the database name. Still, each database produced by the same organization is described separately under the producer's name. This work is the most valuable if you know a database name or producer and want to find out more information about them.

The new sixth edition is divided into an international volume and a United States volume. Together they include information on approximately 3600 databases. After the main producer entry there are separate entries for each database created by that producer. These entries contain full descriptive information about the database.



Several of the *Encyclopedia*'s 27 indexes are of special interest to database users. The "Computer-Readable Data Bases Index" lists names and acronyms of databases and is essential if this work is to be used as a database directory. The "Subject Index" includes general and specific subject listings for all entries in the *Encyclopedia*, including databases. (There is no way to tell databases apart from organizations in the subject index, however.) A "Data Base Producers and Publishers Index" puts all 2200 producers together. An "Online Services/Telecommunications Networks Index" lists nearly 400 online vendors and time-sharing systems.

Although the *Encyclopedia* is not meant to be primarily a database directory as are the others described here, its value to online searchers should not be overlooked.

Datapro directories

Datapro Research Corporation publishes two database directories—the well-known *Datapro Directory of Online Services* and the newer *Datapro Complete Guide to Dial-Up Databases*. The latter is merely a one-volume extract of portions of the two-volume *Directory*. No one needs both works (and for what you get for the price it is questionable whether anyone needs either).

The two-volume *Directory* includes a monthly update service, something that is not available for the one-volume *Complete Guide*. The *Directory* costs $449 for the two master volumes and one year of updates, with a second year renewal price of $394. The *Complete Guide* is $145.

Both works include descriptions of over 1400 publicly available databases. Database profiles are arranged alphabetically in the main section with detailed information about each database.

In addition to the database information and subject index to it, there are in-depth profiles of 15 online vendors. Of the over 400 vendors listed in the Cuadra directory the choice of these 15 seems curious. BRS, DIALOG, and Mead Data Central are all included, but NLM, SDC Orbit, and Westlaw are not. OCLC is profiled, UTLAS, WLN, and RLIN are not. Other vendors of interest to libraries that are omitted include Pergamon InfoLine, VU-TEXT, WILSONLINE, and ESA. According to Datapro, vendors were chosen by "editorial discretion."

Other sections in both directories include tutorials on the use of microcomputers for online searching and comparative summaries of microcomputer communications software and modems. Unique to the Datapro publications is a section that reports the results of a Datapro survey of online users who were asked to rank the major online vendors. The information is interesting but may be of limited use as it includes only user's *opinions* of typical system response time, system dependability (up-time), adequacy of documentation, and overall satisfaction.

The main strength of the Datapro *Directory* is its looseleaf updating, not available for the *Complete Guide*. The software and modem comparisons and microcomputer tutorials are valuable, but available in more depth elsewhere. (See the bibliography in my March 15 column.) The database and vendor information are handled better by the database directories produced by the experts in the online field.

Other comprehensive directories

Hall and Brown's *Online Bibliographic Directory* is the third edition of a directory published by Aslib. The editors have chosen not to attempt complete comprehensiveness, instead they state the purpose is to provide information on the "principal" English-language online bibliographic databases. All patents databases are omitted, but criteria for other exclusions is not always so clear.

The information included about each database in the directory is complete, including access charges and a reproduction of a typical record, in addition to the usual descriptive information. Other databases are mentioned in the general index.

Although not recommended as a substitute for a more up-to-date and truly comprehensive directory, this work is valuable for its introductory figures on the database industry, its extensive bibliography, and the complete treatment given approximately 180 selected databases.

Directory of Online Information Resources, published twice a year, is a directory that includes only "the most pop-

Carol Tenopir is Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Library Studies, University of Hawaii, Manoa

ular" databases available in the United States and Canada. Once again, criteria for inclusion of the approximately 600 databases in the 1982 edition is not always clear.

Information about each database is less complete than in *Online Bibliographic Databases*, but includes price as well as descriptive information. Indexes give vendor and producer addresses and all databases created by a producer or available on a vendor's system. The main advantage of this directory is its price of $18.50 for one edition or $48 for a two-year subscription (four editions).

End user directories

"End User Directories" is somewhat of a misnomer since many of the so-called comprehensive directories are used by end users as well and the specialty directories are often marketed to end users. The distinction is made here to differentiate those directories that are sold primarily as inexpensive trade books for a general home computer audience. They concentrate on databases and online services of wide appeal and interest.

Three of the best bargains in this genre are Howitt and Weinberger's *Inc. Magazine's Databasics*, Newlin's *Answers Online*, and Davies and Edlehart's *Omni Online Database Directory*. Each briefly describes commercially available databases, is arranged by subject, and includes additional information that describes databases, online services, and how they might be used.

The Newlin book is the best choice for the total novice. It clearly defines types of databases, online services, and how to get started doing online searching. Editorial comments ranking the databases provide useful distinctions for the novice and seem fair.

Davies and Edlehart is recommended because it starts with useful tutorial information, provides "user's comments" on the databases included, has a vendor directory with addresses and the databases provided by that vendor, and includes a subject index. The information about selected vendors is too limited to be really useful, however.

Inc. Magazine's Databasics is an excellent book but is more limited in its scope. Approximately 100 databases of interest especially to the business community were selected for detailed coverage. The definition of "of interest" to the business community is broad, however, including news, demographics, science and technology, energy and the environment, computers and electronics, and patents and trademarks in addition to business databases.

The information on the 100 databases is detailed, including sample records and things not found in other directories (e.g., a list of journals covered in a database). Other sections provide information on online vendors, information brokers, modems, software, terminals, and selected reference sources. Clear definitions of databases and online services make this a valuable end user tool.

Specialty directories

Subject specialists and information professionals are finding that subsets of database directories are often more useful tools than comprehensive directories when their searching is limited to a particular subject area. In response to this need there is an increasing number of subject specialty directories. These are often in trade book form, such as the Cuadra Associates plans to make subject specialty subsets of their directory available on floppy disks.

The scope and intended audience of these directories varies. They are of use primarily if you need information on databases in a particular subject. The list of specialty directories at the end of this column is not comprehensive because many specialty directories are available only on a limited basis and most are of less general interest.

Selected database directories

Comprehensive directories

Cuadra Associates Inc. *Directory of Online Databases*. Santa Monica, CA: Cuadra Associates, Inc., quarterly. $95/yr. or $180/2 yrs.

Data Base Directory. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc. in association with the American Society for Information Science, twice yearly. $215/yr. or $120/6 mos.

Datapro Complete Guide to Dial-Up Databases. Delran, NJ: Datapro Research Corporation, yearly. $145. Extracted from directory below.

Datapro Directory of On-Line Services. 2 vols. Delran, NJ: Datapro Research Corporation, monthly updates. $449 including first year of updates, $394 renewal.

Directory of Online Databases. Tulsa, OK: Pennwell Publishing Co., 1983. $45.

Directory of Online Information Resources. Kensington, MD: CSG Press, twice yearly. $18.50 plus $1.50 handling for one issue; 2-year subscription (4 vols.) $48.

Encyclopedia of Information Systems and Services. 6th ed. 2 vols. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1985-1986. $325.

EUSIDIC: Database Guide. Medford, NJ: Learned Information, 1983. $50.

Hall, James L. & Marjorie I. Brown, eds. *Online Bibliographic Databases: A Directory and Sourcebook*. 3d ed. London, England: Aslib, 1983. Distributed in the U.S. and Canada by Gale Research Company. $95.

Information Industry Market Place: An International Directory of Information Products and Services. 5th ed. New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1984. $49.95.

North American Online Directory. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1985. $75.

Williams, Martha E. & Lawrence Lannom & Carolyn G. Robins, eds. *Computer-Readable Databases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook*. 2 vols. Chicago: American Library Association, 1985. $157.50.

Directories for End Users

Cane, Mike. *The Computer Phone Book: Directory of Online Systems*. New York: Plume, 1985. $14.95.

Davies, Owen & Mike Edlehart. *Omni Online Database Directory 1985*. rev. ed. New York: Collier, 1985. $13.95.

Guide to Online Databases. Boca Raton, FL: Newsletter Management Corporation, 1983, n.p.

Howitt, Doran & Marvin J. Weinberger. *Inc. Magazine's Databasics: Your Guide to Online Business Information*. New York: Garland, 1984. $19.95.

Lambert, Steve. *Online: A Guide to America's Leading Information Services*. Bellvue, WA: Microsoft Press, 1985. $19.95.

Lesko, Matthew. *The Computer Data and Database Source Book*. New York: Avon, 1984. (Low quality paper.) $14.95.

Newlin, Barbara. *Answers Online: Your Guide to Informational Data Bases*. Berkeley, CA: Osborne-McGraw, 1984. $16.95.

Radford, Fred C. *Database Finding Aid*. Byron Center, MI: Alert Consultants, 1984. Print $19.95, diskettes $49.95.

Shafritz, Jay M. & Louis Alexander. The Reston Directory of Online Data Bases. Reston, VA: Reston, 1984. $17.95 paper.

Specialty directories

Burk, Cornelius F., Jr. *Geoscience Numeric and Bibliographic Data*. Glenside, Australia: Mineral Foundation, 1981. $30.

Chung, Catherine, ed. *Directory of Periodicals Online: Indexed, Abstracted and Full-Text*. 3 vols. Washington, DC: Federal Document Retrieval, 1985. Vol. 1: News, Law and Business, $90. Vol. 2: Medicine and Social Science, in press. Vol. 3: Science and Technology, in press.

Directory of United Nations Information Centers, Information Systems, and Data Bases. 2 vols. Geneva: Inter-Organization Board for Information Systems, 1980, distributed by Unipub. Vol. 1: *Information Systems and Data Bases*.

Federal Data Base Finder. Chevy Chase, MD: Information USA, 1984. $95.

Harfax Directory of Industry Data Sources: The United States and Canada. 2d ed. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1982. $225.

Harfax Directory of Industry Data Sources: Western Europe. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1983. $125.

International Directory of Data Bases Relating to Companies. New York: Unipub, 1979. $13.

Lengenfelder, Helga. *Libraries, Information Centers and Databases in Science and Technology: A World Guide*. New York: K.G. Saur, 1985. $100.

Mayros, Van & D. Michael Werner. *Databases for Business: Profiles and Applications*. Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Co., 1982. $19.95.

R & D Database Handbook: A Worldwide Guide to Key Scientific and Technical Databases. Ft. Lee, NJ: Technical Insights Inc., 1984. $292.

Schmid, Alex P. *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases, and Literature*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984. $34.95.

Williams, Martha E., ed. *Directory of Agricultural Databases*, 1985. Contact Professor Martha E. Williams, Coordinated Science Laboratory, University of Illinois, Urbana.

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