Usage data improves, Google gets involved, reference ebooks take off

The Information Playground

By Carol Tenopir, Gayle Baker, & William Robinson

A CHILD'S PLAYGROUND—filled with equipment, fields for play, and benches—can be both relaxing and stimulating. Most of us have happy memories of participating, or watching our children romp, in both group and individual activities. But the occasional skinned knee or playground bully brings tears. Like the playground, the events in the database industry were mostly positive last year, with just enough distressing occurrences to make us want to cry for help.

As children mature, they learn to "play nice" together rather than grabbing at one another's toys. Group play, including alliances, partnerships, and mergers and acquisitions, is evident in today's database marketplace. Sixty-eight percent of our survey respondents have recently made an acquisition or formed a partnership.

Although the pace seems to be slowing, acquisitions continue. Thomson ISI purchased BIOSIS, bringing a not-for-profit into the for-profit sector. Other notable acquisitions include ProQuest's purchase of both SIRS and bigchalk and the TDNet buy of JournalWEbCite. Bertelsmann Springer is being merged with Kluwer Academic Publishing by the investment companies that purchased them.

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Playing together

Partnerships, in particular linking agreements, are especially noteworthy this year. Thomson Gale and Corbis reached an exclusive agreement in which Gale will distribute the Corbis image collection to schools, colleges, and public libraries. The Corbis collection includes the Bettmann Archive, a fine art collection, and many other images from nature, science, and space.

ProQuest began linking to Project MUSE articles. WilsonWeb will link to JSTOR, Swets, Ingenta, and more full-text services, thanks to the SFX OpenURL linking that was added as part of the recent redesign. OpenURL compliance was also added by ABC-CLIO, allowing the firm to link to more journals, including those in JSTOR and Oxford University Press. EBSCO and Ovid unveiled their own OpenURL link resolvers.

Playing by the rules

When database companies play by industry standards, such as OpenURL, libraries can provide more integration between bibliographic and full-text information. COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is a two-year-old international standard for recording and providing usage data. When database companies provide COUNTER-compliant standard usage data to libraries, they are playing by "rules" that add efficiency and effectiveness to database use.

The trend of database companies to comply with the standards continued this year. Emerald and Gale are just two of the latest electronic publishers to provide COUNTER-compliant data. IEEE recently audited its Xplore system usage data to make sure it provides accurate material to libraries.

Play fair

Libraries prefer choices in pricing options. Dialog announced Dialog Choice,

The Typical 2003 Database Vendor

- Most are creator-publishers
- Libraries are more than 75 percent of their market
- Academic libraries are the primary market
- Nearly 70 percent have recently made an acquisition or formed a partnership
- Nearly 90 percent have new products
- The web is the most popular delivery mode
- Flat-fee subscriptions are the most popular pricing option

a fixed-price option that will especially appeal to corporations and government agencies that do substantial enterprisewide online research. Our industry respondents report that flat-fee subscription plans are the most popular pricing option (see Table 1, p. 40–41), but most offer a variety of pricing options.

Pay per view plans are being reintroduced by several companies, including Wiley InterScience, eLibrary, Springer LINK, and Ovid. These hope to attract infrequent end users both independently and through libraries. In most cases, searching and viewing abstracts are free, with payment due once a full text is selected. On the other hand, Wilson no longer allows access to its databases via FirstSearch.

Other pay per use services were resurrected. Northern Light is back in business for enterprise customers with its web search engine and premium content and for individual subscribers. Questia, the online book service for end users, isn't dead yet. It secured $10 million in debt financing.

Stickball or Little League?

Kids who want to get really good at baseball (or whose parents want them to be) join Little League. But stickball, which requires only a broom handle and something to hit, can be played with minimal rules and no coaches. Sometimes a student or researcher just wants information quickly and easily from the web—without obvious restrictions or the need for overseers. Other times, only the best strategies and content will do.

Partnering with Google is a way for database companies to offer both options. Database industry stalwarts make their content available to web systems and web search engines in response to research that says students and others turn first to web search engines. OCLC is experimenting with WorldCat records on Google, including a link to the nearest library holding information if a Google user provides a zip code. WorldCat and holding records are now also linked with book seller sites, including ABE, Alibris, and Bookpage.com.

Gale InfoTrac users can employ Google's image search feature while searching InfoTrac to find images to accompany its articles. Yahoo is aggressively courting content providers for direct and sometimes exclusive feeds into Yahoo's new search engine. So far Yahoo and Google have found many takers—including the Institute of Physics, IEEE (for technical reports), Emerald, ProQuest, OCLC, and Reed Business Information (*LJ*'s parent company).

Google's Advanced News Search brought the power of the big leagues to the sandlot. It provides power search features such as phrase searching, field searching, and date restriction in mainstream news sources like *CNN*, the *Financial Times*, *USA Today*, and the *New York Times*.

Newspaper Direct, introduced at the American Library Association's Midwinter Meeting 2004, will deliver daily digital editions of nearly 200 newspapers to libraries. Titles include many major dailies—including the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Le Monde*.

Easy-to-use versions of standard databases are aimed at end users. For example, Bowker's PatronBooksInPrint.com is a web-based version tailored to the general public library user. It includes readers' advisory features such as searching by genre, tagging Oprah's Book Club picks, and creating personal reading lists.

Take turns

Everyone should get a turn with an information product. Spanish speakers now have R.R. Bowker's Spanish Books in Print and new Spanish-language periodical databases. Thomson Gale is expanding its Spanish-language databases—Consulta and Informe—and OCLC added CLASE/Periodica (indexing Spanish and Portuguese materials) to FirstSearch. Alexander Street Press will launch Latino Literature in the summer.

Books are slowly but surely taking their turn in the digital collection world. Amazon.com premiered "Search Inside the Book" to turn Amazon's sales site into a full-text finding aid. Knovel continues strong in the special library market with its ebook collections, particularly wherever engineers are served. Elsevier has just begun adding ebooks to ScienceDirect. Ebrary provides ebooks to the general public and academic library markets. Greenwood Electronic Media does the same for schools.

The Gale Virtual Reference Library brings together over 100 reference books, including encyclopedias, almanacs, directories, and other series. Users can view tables of contents or search across the collection. Oxford Scholarship Online and Oxford Reference Online provide enhanced access to core books in the humanities and social sciences and reference works. Book Index with Reviews is forthcoming from EBSCO Publishing's NoveList, in association with Baker & Taylor.

Ebooks work well as reference sources, especially when aggregated by subject. They work best with considerable investment in sophisticated structuring, search, and analysis software. But as consumer products, ebooks are still a bust, and Barnes & Noble announced in early 2004 that it would stop selling ebooks.

Trends To Watch

- Increased direct linking
- More databases with full text
- More usage information and increased COUNTER-compliance
- A slow increase in products with perpetual rights
- If shrinking library budgets inhibit the rollout of new products

Ebooks for the research library, however, may be coming into their own in a huge way. Notable is Google and Stanford University's announced collaboration to digitize Stanford Library's entire collection of pre-1923 books. If students turn first to Google for research information, will we start seeing term papers full of citations to 100-year-old monographs?

Climbing structures

The joy of climbing structures (or "jungle gyms") is that with a little imagination they can become anything—from a fort to a castle. New generations of product features promise this kind of flexibility—though it won't be imaginary.

Thomson ISI's RefViz is a visualization tool that allows researchers to explore major topics via a new view. Data mining tools are also in the works. The National Library of Medicine considers data mining to be the major use of Medline leased tapes.

ProQuest's new system, PQNext, has an option to format citations in order to print out bibliographies of selected articles in various styles (APA, MLA, etc.) and allows users to export citations directly into EndNote, ProCite, or Reference Manager software. RLG's Eureka also allows users to export citations to EndNote or ProCite.

Sometimes the most fun comes from making a toy out of something created for an entirely different purpose—like a big cardboard box. Database providers are learning to fashion general office software into online searching equipment by providing access to their content through Microsoft Office software.

Factiva, Lexis, Ovid, Gale, and HighBeam Research (formerly Alacritude) and others are participating in Microsoft searching, which allows a user of Office applications like Word, Access, or Excel to search for a citation, a fact, or more information from within a document.

Searching becomes a secondary process to writing, or an integral part of creating rather than a separate first operation. From most of these systems, users get metadata or headlines only, unless they are subscribers to the full system or, in the case of HighBeam's eLibrary, pay per use with a credit card.

I'll take my ball and go home

The kid who has a basketball hoop at home *and* owns the ball can pretty much dictate terms. CSA consolidated its position as one of the leaders in the academic library marketplace by making improvements to its home search system and by pulling more of its databases from competitors' systems.

Following last year's removal of CSA databases from Dialog and EBSCO*host*, CSA this year removed all of its files from Ovid/SilverPlatter, including such popular indexes as Sociological Abstracts, LISA, and Aquatic Sciences & Fisheries Database. CSA has made it clear that its databases will only be on systems that provide a level of linking and other features it wants. Although CSA databases are still available on some other aggregators (and it has reached an agreement with STN to provide more databases), many of its academic library users are migrating to CSA's own online platform, IDS (Internet Database Service).

CSA's earlier defection from EBSCO*host* didn't seem to hurt EBSCO much. The company just turned elsewhere to purchase its own files or provide access to other major indexes. As a result, EBSCO has become a stronger player than ever. The purchase of CINAHL brings nursing under the EBSCO*host* umbrella. Other notable recent additions to the EBSCO*host* family include *Information Science and Technology Abstracts*, *American Humanities Index*, and *The International Bibliography of Theatre*. H.W. Wilson's databases continue to be brought up on EBSCO*host*, with new additions of *Library Literature & Information* and *Art Index Retrospective*.

Commercial services aren't the only ones that can remove databases. This year the federal government took down the popular AskERIC service and, from January 2004 until a "new ERIC model" is developed, no new materials will be added to the ERIC database. The new model refers to the end of the old ERIC Clearinghouse concept in favor of the Computer Sciences Corporation of Rockville, MD, contracted to run and maintain the ERIC database.

Kings of the hill

Whether you see it as the king of the hill or the playground bully, Elsevier continues to rule commercial primary scholarly publishing. With the acquisition of competitors over the last few years, Elsevier (no longer "Elsevier Science") now publishes over 1700 journals as well as a growing list of reference materials and books. The "Science" in the name was deliberately removed to reflect new acquisitions in medicine, humanities, and social sciences.

But changes are afoot. Elsevier has given up on its science and technology portals; BioMedNet, ChemWeb, and ElsevierEngineering.com have been discontinued. Some libraries, notably Cornell, decided against Big Deals and preferred to return to the old model of selecting individual journal titles.

Google remains the king of the mass market hill and, with new agreements with both the database industry

TABLE 1 Firms and Their

FIRM	Signature Product
AARP	Ageline Database
ABC-CLIO	History databases
ACLS History E-Book Project	History E-Book Project
Alexander Street	Semantic indexing in all
American Psychiatric Publishing	DSM-IV-TR
R.R. Bowker	BooksInPrint.com
Cambridge Internet Information Group	Database Service
CISTI	Suite of complementary products
Chemical Abstracts Service	CA Plus and CA Registry
Classical International	Classical Music Library
CQ Press	CQ Researcher Online
Marcel Dekker	Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science
ebrary	Academic Complete
EBSCO	Business Source Premier
Factiva	Factiva.com
Facts On File	History Database Center
Facts On File News Service	The Reference Suite @ FACTS.com
GeoLytics	Neighborhood Change Database
Greenwood Electronic Media	Greenwood Daily Life Online
Grey House Publishing	Directory of Mail Order Catalogs
HighWire Press	Highwire Portal's free search & alert features
Idea Group	InfoSci-Online aggregated database
Ingenta	Ingenta.com
Kluwer Academic Publishers	Kluwer Online Journals
Knovel Corporation	Knovel Complete
LexisNexis	LexisNexis Academic
National Information Services Corp.	Family & Society Studies Worldwide
Natl. Women's Health Information Center	www.4women.gov
OCLC	WorldCat
Otherdays.com	Placenames
Oxford University Press	Oxford English Dictionary
Project MUSE	Project MUSE
ProQuest	ABI/INFORM; ProQuest Historical Newspapers
ReferenceUSA	ReferenceUSA
Science Direct	Science Direct
Snapshots International	Snapshots Market Research Reports
Springer Science-Business	SpringerLink
Thomson Gale	InfoTrac Web
H.W. Wilson	Readers' Guide Full Text
World Bank	World Bank eLibrary
xrefer	xreferplus Unlimited

Database Services

Leading Subject Area	Primary Sales	Most Popular Format	Links to Documents	Percentage in Full Text	Most Popular Training Method	Z39.50 Compatible	Most Popular Pricing Method	Perpetual Rights	Provides Usage Data
social sciences	academic	n/a	some	<25%	web site	no	concurrent user	no or few	no
history	academic	ASCII text	some	n/a	web site	under consideration	concurrent user	some	yes
history	academic	scanned image	some	n/a	web site	all	concurrent user	no or few	yes
literature	academic	HTML	some	>75%	print	under consideration	flat fee	no or few	yes
psychiatry	academic	HTML	some	n/a	web site	under consideration	flat fee	some	under consideration
bibliography	public	HTML	some	<25%	print	some	concurrent user	no or few	yes
science & technology	academic	XML	all	<25%	web site	all	flat fee	some	yes
science & technology	academic	scanned image	all	<25%	web site	some	per order fee	some	yes
chemistry	academic	n/a	all	n/a	n/a	some	n/a	no or few	n/a
music	public	n/a	n/a	n/a	web site	n/a	potential user	no or few	yes
political science	academic	XML	some	>75%	tutorial with product	all	concurrent user	no or few	yes
science & technology	academic	HTML	under consideration	n/a	web site	n/a	flat fee	most	under consideration
multidisciplinary	academic	HTML	all	>75%	tutorial with product	under consideration	flat fee	no or few	yes
multidisciplinary	academic	PDF	all	n/a	tutorial with product	all	flat fee	no or few	yes
business	special	XML	some	n/a	web site	all	flat fee	no or few	yes
history	school	HTML	no	<25%	workshop training	no	potential user	no or few	yes
social sciences	school	HTML	some	n/a	tutorial with product	no	potential user	no or few	yes
social sciences	academic	ASCII text	some	<25%	print	no	flat fee	no or few	no
humanities	school	HTML	some	>75%	tutorial with product	under consideration	potential user	some	yes
business	academic	XML	no	>75%	tutorial with product	under consideration	flat fee	no or few	no
science	academic	HTML	all	n/a	workshop training	under consideration	flat fee	some	yes
information science & technology	academic	PDF	no	n/a	web site	under consideration	concurrent user	no or few	under consideration
multidisciplinary	academic	PDF	some	n/a	web site	no	flat fee	some	yes
science	academic	PDF	some	51–74%	print	some	flat fee	most	yes
science & technology	special	HTML	all	>75%	web site	no	concurrent user	no or few	yes
multidisciplinary	academic	HTML	some	>75%	web site	no	potential user	no or few	yes
social sciences	academic	HTML	some	<25%	tutorial with product	no	concurrent user	no or few	available soon
health	public & school	HTML	no	n/a	web site	no	free	no or few	yes
multidisciplinary	academic	ASCII text	all	<25%	web site	all	concurrent user	no or few	yes
history	public	HTML	some	n/a	tutorial with product	under consideration	concurrent user	no or few	yes
humanities	academic	XML	some	>75%	tutorial with product	some	concurrent user	no or few	yes
humanities	academic	HTML	all	>75%	web site	no	flat fee	all	yes
multidisciplinary	academic	WWW	some	>75%	tutorial with product	some	concurrent user	some	yes
business	public	ASCII text	some	<25%	tutorial with product	no	flat fee	some	yes
science & technology	academic	PDF	some	>75%	web site	all	flat fee	most	yes
business	academic	HTML	all	n/a	web site	under consideration	flat fee	no or few	yes
science	academic	PDF	some	>75%	web site	under consideration	connect time	some	yes
multidisciplinary	n/a	HTML	some	>75%	n/a	some	flat fee	some	yes
multidisciplinary	academic	HTML	all	26–50%	print	all	concurrent user	no or few	yes
economics	academic	PDF	some	n/a	tutorial with product	no	potential user	some	yes
multidisciplinary	academic	XML	no	>75%	web site	all	flat fee	no or few	yes