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Finding Full Text for Articles

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Finding Full Text for Articles

OF ALL THE TOPICS I've written about recently, the one that gets the most requests for updates is information about full texts of journal and magazine articles. I am still getting e-mail about last year's column "Should We Cancel Print?" (*LJ* 9/1/99, p. 138,142), which discusses the completeness and characteristics of various versions of online journals.

Why? First, all librarians are actively looking for alternatives to print journal collections, as serials budgets stagnate (or get cut), print journals take up as much space, and patrons want to access everything from a single workstation. Secondly, the number of electronic journal titles is growing almost daily, so it's hard to keep up. Just what journals are available online, either for a fee or for free? Some publications help answer that question.

Directories: *FSO*

Over the years, I have frequently mentioned *Fulltext Sources Online (FSO)*—the standard reference resource for finding what journals and magazines are available from which online services. Actually, *FSO* covers more than journals and magazines—it includes listings for "periodicals, newspapers, newswires, newsletters, and TV/radio transcripts."

Now published by Information Today, Inc. and edited by Donald T. Hawkins and Mary B. Glöse, *FSO* lists more than 11,000 sources alphabetically by title. Each source listing provides the names of the online aggregators that provide access to the title plus, for each version, dates of coverage, file names, and update frequency. For the last few years, URLs are also included for titles available directly from their publishers.



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Now in its 12th year, *FSO* seems to add some new data element regularly. First it added date ranges, then, more recently, URLs; next came "timelag" (how long an electronic version lagged behind its print equivalent). Last year, *FSO* added summary comments; this year it is ISSNs. To order, contact Information Today, Inc. at 609-654-6299; (www.infotoday.com). A one-year subscription (January and July 2000) is \$199.

Directories: *Net.Journal*

This is the first time I have reviewed another important ongoing directory of online full-text periodicals. Hermograph's *Net.Journal Directory*, edited by Lawrence Krumenaker, is now in its sixth edition. It includes listings for over 15,000 "scholarly journals, consumer magazines, U.S. and world newspapers, trade papers, and newsletters" that are available on the web from fee-based aggregators or directly from publishers. Like *FSO*, *Net.Journal* is issued twice a year and arranged alphabetically by source title.

Under the current title listing, *Net.Journal* provides a cross reference to a former name. For example, under the entry for *Snack World* (available on DialogWeb and FirstSearch), you will find that its old title was *Chipper Snacker*. *Today's Homeowner* was titled *Home Mechanix* before September 1996; the listing for *Home Mechanix* states that a former name was *Mechanix Illustrated*, but the current name is *Today's Homeowner*. These cross references do not always go both ways, however. The *Chipper Snacker* entry states that it is available on DialogWeb with coverage from 1986 to 1987 but not that it continues to be published (and available online) under a different name.

Net.Journal packs a lot of information into a concise journal title listing. Each version includes a code to indicate the main formats offered in that version (e.g., text only, text with graphics, PDF, etc.) and, if applicable, price per article. The few totally free sites are designated with a star. To order, contact Hermograph Press, 678-445-4189;

(www.hermograph.com); \$220 for two editions per year.

Trends in online journals

Examining these two comprehensive directories reveals much about the state of online journals and magazines. Whether accessed through an aggregator such as Dialog, Lexis-Nexis, and FirstSearch or directly from a publisher's web site, the vast majority of periodical archives charge a fee.

The fee may just be per article, as from Northern Light, or it may be a monthly subscription fee (or a combination of the two), but very few sites provide anything free beyond the most current news stories. Searching still carries a charge in subscription services and traditional online services, but some newer services, such as the National Library of Medicine's PubMed and Northern Light, charge only for documents selected.

As *Net.Journal's* editor Krumenaker points out, "The myth that much information is free on the web is just that—a myth—in terms of magazine articles. There are many web sites with a free version of one or a few publications, but the great majority of all periodicals are found in fee-based services, priced from the consumer level up to corporate and library system levels."

Secondly, contrary to predictions, the serials world still has its feet planted firmly in print. Most electronic texts are still just variations on print journals, although the number of electronic-only journals is growing. Not only are print versions still prevalent, but in many cases the digital versions are incomplete collections of selected articles.

Missing archives

Like *FSO*, *Net.Journal* includes dates of coverage for each version of a title. In older editions, *Net.Journal* also indicates which versions of a title include only selected titles, to differentiate between those versions that include most of the equivalent print journal. Starting with the fifth edition, however, editors cut back on this designation, explaining in the preface, "[I]t is becom-

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ing pointless to note whether archives contain only 'Selected Full Text' coverage," as virtually all sites deserve such designation. Such a listing will be eliminated over time, though the directory will mention when a site clearly offers just "samples" of articles.

Old volumes of these directories reveal a marked increase in the number of services or web sites providing access to each title. As I reported in that earlier column, the founder and former editor of *FSO* witnessed an increase from an average of two sources per title in 1989 to six sources per title in 1998. That number appears to be even larger today. Very few journal titles are available in only one place any more, and most can be found in multiple services.

This may seem complicated, but it provides libraries with negotiating power. A business title such as *HR Focus* (former title, *Personnel*), for example, is available in over half a dozen databases on both Dialog and FirstSearch and on Dow Jones Interactive, DR-LINK, EBSCOhost, Electric Library, Lexis-Nexis Universe, InfoTrac, InSite, Northern Light, ProQuest Direct, WilsonWeb, etc. *HR Magazine* (formerly *Personnel Administrator*) offers recent articles in PDF for free on the publisher's web site, plus fuller archives from over 20 databases and online services. These examples are not atypical.

Online directories

The latest enhancement to directories of online full texts is to bring the directories themselves online. Hermograph offers a free online subset of its *Net.Journal Directory* from its web site (www.hermograph.com), listing some 400 journals and magazines that provide free web access to articles. This link is a great way to expand cheaply a library's periodicals collection.

The hotlinked journal titles are arranged alphabetically within subject categories. The greatest number of free titles fall under the categories of "science" and "business," but there are also numerous free journals listed under miscellaneous, general, computer, government, education, and international.

On its web site, Information Today also provides a directory subset, but it is available only to subscribers of the printed *FSO* directory. Located in the "Private Zone" section of the Information Today web site (it requires a password), this online directory also focuses

just on those titles that provide free archives on the web.

DialogWeb/FT

Hermograph Press has issued a new title in its "Successful Surfing" series that combines a full-text directory with a how-to guide to searching one specific system. *DialogWeb/FT* by Jill

If you are replacing a print journal with an electronic equivalent, beware—sometimes entire years of coverage will be missing

Ann Hurst (a librarian and independent information professional) carries the subtitle *Navigating the Periodical Jungle: Titles, Variants, Data Gaps and Duplications*.

Like *Net.Journal Directory*, the new book is mostly an alphabetical listing of periodical titles available online. For each title, it provides the Dialog file number where the journal is found in full text, plus the date coverage. For each version of each title, a uniquely helpful year-by-year graph depicts completeness or gaps in coverage.

For example, the title *R & D Management* is available in two databases on Dialog—file #15 (ABI/INFORM) and file #148 (Trade & Industry Database). But file 15 only includes full text from one year (1992), while file 148 includes full text from 1999, 1998, 1997, 1995, and 1992. Such appalling gaps in coverage are the hidden dirty secrets of online full texts. Although such gaps are often revealed in in-depth reviews of specific databases, this book unearths such gaps for the first time on the scale of an entire online service.

The above example is not an isolated one. Browsing through the graphs in *DialogWeb/FT* shows which databases are the most up-to-date for specific journal titles, which have the deepest archives, and which have inexplicable gaps in coverage. File 485 (Accounting and Tax Database), for example, covers *Northern Ontario Business* supposedly

for 1987 to the present, but somehow missed covering it in 1998, 1995, 1992, and 1991. There may be even more gaps on a monthly basis.

Hurst provides some possible explanations for the gaps she uncovered. She speculates that "if an issue arises over the rights to a specific journal or articles by a specific author, the database producer will often request that the records in question be deleted." During file maintenance, records that contain errors may be corrected or removed.

"Other reasons for gaps may be that the database provider or Dialog lost the rights to make the periodicals available online, then got the rights back without getting a backfile, or that publications temporarily cease publication or do not make a series of issues available for online venues. Also, issues might be filed under a different name, deliberately or by carelessness in quality control." Hurst is too diplomatic to cite the possibility of carelessness in database updating schedules and lack of checking for completeness.

Hurst's *DialogWeb/FT* is not just a detailed journal title directory. By focusing on a single online system, Hurst can provide some specific searching tips for DialogWeb and explain her methodology so it can be replicated. Since DialogWeb is basically just a graphical user interface to the Dialog service, this directory also works for users of Dialog's command system, DialogClassic.

Gaps not uncommon

Although Hurst has made strides, such gaps have been reported for years on a database-by-database level. As early as the 1980s, Ruth Pagell (now business librarian at Emory University, Atlanta) posed the classic question, "How full is full?" Peter Jacso of the University of Hawaii also made his reputation uncovering this kind of dirty database secret. Later this year, his *Content Evaluation of CD-ROM and Web Databases* will be published by Libraries Unlimited.

The bottom line remains the same—if you are replacing a print journal with an electronic equivalent, beware. Not only are entire parts of full texts omitted on a routine basis sometimes even entire years of coverage may be missing. Directories such as these help point out where the gaps occur. Now it will be up to publishers, aggregators, archivists, and librarians to solve the problem.