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LJ INFOTECH

□ ONLINE DATABASES □

BY CAROL TENOPIR

Database Producers Go Online

THE DIFFERENCE between database producers and online vendors used to be clear: Database producers created the content, online vendors made the content available online. There were always a few notable exceptions such as the National Library of Medicine, but for the most part each role was distinct. Companies such as Information Access Company (IAC) and UMI produced databases, companies such as DIALOG and BRS made them accessible.

The H.W. Wilson Company changed the picture in the early 1980s when it expanded from print products into its own online system, Wilsonline. Recently, several major producers of general interest databases have expanded to include the online vendor role. IAC, EBSCO, and UMI all have joined Wilson as online purveyors of their own content. Although their databases are still available on third-party online systems such as DIALOG, FirstSearch, and NEXIS (and on CD-ROM and tape), each has introduced its own online system. What makes these new systems stand out from early online systems is their use of client/server technology, Z39.50 compliance, graphical user interfaces (GUIs), access over the Internet, and use of the World Wide Web (WWW) for enhanced document delivery.

IAC InfoTrac SearchBank

IAC's InfoTrac SearchBank got its name this year, but it began two years ago as the InfoTrac Central 2000 service. The InfoTrac interface and databases are familiar to many libraries from the popular InfoTrac CD-ROM products. Many of the databases have been online for years with other systems.

Although CD-ROM products are

popular in libraries, CD-ROM has some inherent limitations, e.g., on the number of simultaneous users, location of those users, the amount of full text that can be held on a disc, and the frequency of updates. InfoTrac SearchBank and the other systems described here take the positives of their CD-ROM (a friendly interface and a fixed subscription price) and add the power of online access to overcome the limitations.

Bibliographic and full-text databases

Libraries can use the Internet to connect to InfoTrac SearchBank. It is Z39.50 compliant, so if you have a Z39.50 compliant OPAC, the SearchBank databases can be made accessible using your existing OPAC interface or you can choose the InfoTrac interface.

IAC's bibliographic and full-text databases were the first ones available on InfoTrac SearchBank. Familiar titles such as Magazine Index Plus, General Periodicals Index/ASAP, Health Reference Center Gold, General Business-File, Academic Index/ASAP, Legal Resource Index, and Computer Database offer indexing and, often, ASCII full text of periodical articles. IAC will make 13 of its databases available on InfoTrac SearchBank this year.

In addition, IAC has begun to offer databases produced by other publishers: ERIC, Books in Print, PAIS International, Ei Compendex*Plus, PsycINFO, Pro CD Phone, and Current Contents will be offered in 1996, with a separate subscription fee required for each.

InfoTrac SearchBank offers several options for document delivery of full texts for many of the articles retrieved. The InfoTrac ASAP databases provide ASCII full text, while image text can be delivered via web browsers or ordered from any terminal for printing at the InfoTrac Articles Print Station. Beginning later in 1996 the "Full Document Supply Service" will allow delivery of full text and full images via E-mail, FAX, or mail.

Web access

InfoTrac SearchBank is also searchable through standard WWW

browsers such as Mosaic or Netscape. This allows users to access the images and ASCII text without the need for the library to distribute software or maintain a dedicated server. Web access means more choices for full-text document delivery.

Pricing is based on a subscription basis for each selected database, with prices varying according to a library's book budget. Unlimited use of each SearchBank database ranges upward from a low of about \$2000 per year.

EBSCOhost

Like IAC, EBSCO has had success with direct sales of CD-ROM. More recently, its databases have appeared on third-party online systems such as OCLC's FirstSearch. Last June EBSCO became its own online vendor with its EBSCOhost system.

Like its competition, EBSCOhost is targeted to libraries, library consortia, school districts, universities, and corporations. Access is through the Internet to EBSCO's Massachusetts office. EBSCOhost began as a client/server system that is Z39.50 compliant so libraries can use their OPAC interface or choose the EBSCO Windows interface.

EBSCO's Windows search system will be familiar to users of its CD-ROM. Like SearchBank for InfoTrac, EBSCOhost combines the friendliness of its popular CD-ROM system with the additional powers of online searching. Several databases can be searched at the same time, and both basic and advanced search features are available.

Libraries can customize their EBSCOhost configuration to match their needs either for all workstations or with different options for different workstations. Search screens, printing maximums, and local journal holdings information can all be changed. Bibliographic searches can be limited only to locally held titles or, if the entire database is searched, articles from local holdings can be marked. Library-defined notes or holdings information can be added.

At the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting in January,



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EBSCO demonstrated its new WWW system. The web option is now offered in addition to the existing Z39.50 system. EBSCO and OCLC are working together to create image versions of 1000 journal titles for access over the web.

EBSCO databases

The current version of EBSCOhost began with online access to EBSCO's full-text and bibliographic database, MasterFILE. MasterFILE indexes and abstracts approximately 3000 general interest magazines and journals, while MasterFILE FullTEXT 1000 provides ASCII text for more than 1000 of the titles. New subsets of MasterFILE available in 1996 will be geared to specific audiences. Academic Search Fulltext will include 1000 full-text titles appropriate for academic libraries, while Business Source Elite offers a subset of business titles, including 900 indexed and abstracted and 600 full text.

EBSCO has added two more of its own databases: The Serials Directory and Health Source (full text and indexing/abstracting for medical information); CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature); Sociofile from Sociological Abstracts; and Pro CD Phone are the first offerings from other database publishers.

EBSCOhost offers several options for document delivery in addition to the ASCII full text online through MasterFILE FullTEXT. Starting with the second version of the EBSCOhost software, searchers may mark the results of a search for online ordering of the original article. EBSCOdoc is a web document delivery service that offers documents from EBSCO's standard sources of more than 420,000 titles and can provide any document available to anywhere in the world. Most articles may be delivered by mail or FAX within 24 hours. Images will be available online for some articles in the new web version.

EBSCOhost subscription prices are based on the type of libraries and number of sites accessing the system.

UMI ProQuest Direct

Most libraries are familiar with UMI's electronic products from its range of bibliographic databases on major online systems and its popular CD-ROM bibliographic and image files. In September 1995 UMI extended its ProQuest CD-ROM system to the online world. ProQuest Direct combines an ex-

tensive collection of UMI's own well-respected bibliographic databases with the electronic rights to thousands of full-text magazines, newspapers, and journals. Its full-image files available on CD-ROM since 1989 are now available online.

ProQuest Direct was launched with nine of UMI's bibliographic and full-text databases, including ABI/INFORM, Business Dateline, Business Periodicals, General Periodicals, Dissertation Abstracts, and Newspaper Abstracts with full text access to more than

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3000 journal titles. Notable databases from other publishers include directory and full-text business information from Disclosure and, beginning this year, full text of Harvard Business Review, Financial Times, and the most recent 90 days of the New York Times.

Text+Graphics

Harvard Business Review, Financial Times, and the New York Times, in addition to some of UMI's databases, provide searchable ASCII versions of full-text and bibliographic records. Other databases, such as General Periodicals and Business Periodicals, have full-image articles. Still others offer a combination of searchable ASCII text with scanned images. "Text+Graphics" combination files offer the advantages of full-text searching with access to illustrations, photos, and other graphical material. Not all material is available in all formats—negotiated permissions with the primary publishers determine which articles are available in ASCII, in ASCII plus graphics, or in full image.

ProQuest Direct uses a client/server model and the Internet TCP/IP protocol. Users can access ProQuest via the Internet or with a dedicated high-speed line or with a modem. ProQuest Direct uses a GUI that will be familiar to customers of its CD-ROM products.

Costs

Customers may choose to pay by subscription for unlimited access to selected databases or by transaction pricing. The two payment schemes can be combined, so libraries can subscribe to the databases they are likely to use most and pay on a transaction basis for databases that are used too seldom to warrant a subscription. Academic, public, and school libraries would pay, for example, \$8200 for an annual subscription to the citations and abstracts of ABI/INFORM for one site, one user at a time. If unlimited access to the ASCII full text is added on, the subscription price goes up to \$18,100 per year. Corporations pay more.

Full-image articles can be purchased in blocks (500 articles for \$2000 for academic, public, or school libraries), be paid for on a transaction basis of \$9.75 per article, or be purchased on a flat fee subscription basis for unlimited access. Document delivery orders may be placed online for delivery via E-mail for ASCII text, by FAX, by overnight delivery, or by regular mail.

Will they succeed?

Why do IAC, UMI, and EBSCO think they will succeed as online vendors? Although Wilsonline was the first, it was never particularly successful. CD-ROM and tape loading are much more lucrative for Wilson products than online, and there is greater use of the Wilson databases online on vendors such as FirstSearch than it is on Wilsonline.

Although the prices are high, several factors augur success for these new products: First, the use of online products has greatly increased in the last few years with the widespread use of the Internet. The success of OCLC's FirstSearch shows there is a library market for subscription-based end user online systems.

Making products accessible over the web with standard web browsers provides a comfortable and easy connection for many library clients. The option of Z39.50 compliance is appealing to others, and Internet access is appealing to almost all. Finally, the large amounts of ASCII and image full text are appealing. Bibliographic access is not enough; users want fast and easy delivery of the documents they identify in a bibliographic search. Links to full text in a variety of formats gives these new online services the edge.