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LJ INFOTECH □ ONLINE DATABASES □

BY CAROL TENOPIR

Knight-Ridder's Shopping Spree

WHEN KNIGHT-RIDDER bought DIALOG in 1988, most librarians agreed it was a good move. Certainly Knight-Ridder had more of a presence in the information business as a publisher of newspapers than DIALOG's founder and former owner, Lockheed Missiles and Space Corporation. In the last few years Knight-Ridder has continued to make acquisitions and enter into joint ventures that expand its role in the information world. With its recently announced purchase of CARL Corporation and UnCover Co., Knight-Ridder Information, Inc. (KRII) adds library automation software and expanded document delivery to its panoply of services for information professionals.

CARL and UnCover

CARL represents a new direction for KRII. CARL customers work primarily in academic and public libraries that purchase the CARL software system for library automation. CARL libraries also act as a consortium, sharing access to leased external information resources as well as to each other's internal catalog information. Founded as the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, CARL includes libraries that still resemble a consortium rather than just customers of a commercial venture.

Selling and maintaining library automation systems is something that KRII has never done before. Nor is the company accustomed to working with CARL members: a group of librarians very vocal in their participation. Patrick Tierney, CEO of KRII, told me he wants the CARL member libraries to have a continuing voice in decisions and directions, even though member library representatives will no longer make up the organization's Board of Directors. Tierney said, "We hope to pre-

serve the sense of community" with CARL libraries. KRII has "always done a significant amount of business with public and academic libraries and wants to do more."

CARL CEO Ward Shaw had told *LJ* in an earlier interview that "we're not anticipating any staff changes, we are staying as the CARL Corporation, and we're staying in Denver." CARL hopes to benefit from Knight-Ridder's strong presence in the corporate library market and from its resources and personnel, allowing further technical development. What really attracted Knight-Ridder to CARL was UnCover—CARL's sister periodical and document delivery service.

A perfect fit

An expanded document delivery service fits perfectly into KRII's plans. For years DIALOG handled document delivery by passing on DialOrder E-mail orders to independent document suppliers. In 1993 it acquired Information On Demand, one of the major independent document suppliers.

KR SourceOne, launched in 1994, transformed DIALOG into a direct document supplier. Originally SourceOne was a joint venture with Article Express International, the document supply arm of Engineering Information, Inc. Article Express houses some scanned image collections, such as patents, plus a print collection and a network of "runners" that obtain and copy documents not in the captive collections. DIALOG bought Article Express International outright in October 1994, taking direct control of the document base assembled by Engineering Information.

Customers of KR SourceOne place an online order for any document (whether or not it is found in a DIALOG search). Documents can then be delivered via FAX, U.S. mail, Express Mail, or, as of September 1995, via Internet to any E-mail address specified. Copyright payments are built into the service.

Like KRII, UnCover has been building its digitized document collection by working with libraries and publishers. Joining the two services and the two document collections should greatly enhance the document base and turnaround time of SourceOne.

Online services

Online searching is still KRII's major business. DIALOG was the flagship service when Knight-Ridder took over and remains so today. DataStar, purchased in 1993 from Motor-Columbus of Switzerland, is KRII's other online service. DataStar brings European markets and European business resources to KRII. Today, almost half of its online business comes from outside the United States, and Tierney says the non-U.S. online searching is "the fastest-growing part of our business."

For years Knight-Ridder has been rumored to be merging its DIALOG and DataStar online services. But devout DIALOG users want to keep the same commands and functionality they know, as do avid DataStar searchers. Merging the best of both into a single system seems to appeal to neither group. Instead, KRII has developed Windows-based front-end software to provide searching of both DIALOG and DataStar with a single graphical user interface (GUI). Probase was released in Europe earlier this year and will be launched in the United States early in 1996.

Probase is aimed at information professionals to make "power searching" easier by helping the searcher choose appropriate databases and integrating all of the important but nitpicky information about each individual database. Without Probase, DIALOG searchers now must check the database blue-sheets to find field labels, limiting features, output choices, or unique sorting or searching features for each database.

Probase will allow searchers to use all of the DIALOG or DataStar search features. For example, DIALOG's multifile search feature called Onesearch works differently from DataStar's feature called StarSearch. With Probase either feature can be used on both systems.

International opportunities

With online services being KRII's major focus for international growth, the company expanded its presence in Mexico by installing a DIALOG office where a single independent DIALOG representative had been. Some other



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countries are still served by independent "partners," but KRII would like to have closer relationships.

DataStar has provided information of local interest and an established customer base in Europe. "If we could find an [online] business in Asia or Latin America, we'd buy it in a second," says Tierney. In Canada, local content is handled through a joint venture agreement forged in 1994 between Southam Electronic Publishing and DIALOG. The collaboration offers InfoMart DIALOG in Canada, which combines Canadian information in InfoMart with global information in DIALOG. Canadian customers obtain it as a single service.

Part of KRII's global strategy is to continue to acquire local content for each region. "Scientific and technical literature is truly global, but that is not true on the business side," said Libby Trudell, VP of information professional market development at KRII. "Business information needs to be in the local language and from local sources." She envisions more arrangements where local information will be stored at the country of origin, with seamless links to the full DIALOG or DataStar service. Probase will have localized interfaces in local languages to make searching easier.

Knight-Ridder is expanding its portfolio of international services with Global Reach, now alpha testing. It uses the Personal Library Software (PLS) relevance ranking search engine and will allow customers to use an Internet browser like Netscape to gain access to content. PLS is an independent software company that provides search engines for a variety of online services including America Online, Dow Jones News/Retrieval, and NewsNet (see "The New Generation of Search Software," *Online Databases*, *LJ*, October 1, 1993, p. 67-68). KRII, which holds a minority interest in PLS, is developing other online and CD-ROM products with the firm.

Minority investments

PLS is only one of several small companies that KRII has made significant investments in recently. KRII is involved in a series of joint products with Advanced Research Technologies (ART), Teltech, and Individual, Inc.

ART offers customized DIALOG interfaces for end users within a company. Working with each company and perhaps each department within the company, ART designs an easy-to-use interface that points to selected DIALOG databases for

specific purposes. For example, in a pharmaceutical firm, the ART interfaces for the Intellectual Property department may point just to patents databases. In the Research and Development department, it may point just to pharmaceutical databases.

Originally envisioned for small companies, the interfaces developed by ART have been more successful than anticipated. This past summer, more than 70 DIALOG systems were custom-installed in a variety of companies.

KRII works mostly with libraries and information centers—with academic libraries, public libraries, or with companies that have the infrastructure of an information center

Teltech Resource Network Corporation sells technical research, analysis, and information management services to industry. KRII and Teltech are planning joint marketing as well as new product development. Individual, Inc. serves as a third party to distribute and resell Knight-Ridder's news information as DIALOG Direct. It builds tailored current awareness profiles so information of interest to individuals will be placed automatically in their electronic mailboxes. Via the Internet, right?

KRII's overall strategy

The company's global vision is of "information enabled companies," with KRII providing different types of information for different levels of users. Online services, CD-ROM, and other local products linked to the online services, document delivery, and current awareness products are the four prongs it will continue to emphasize. A range of front-end GUI software products will make searching easier for all different levels of users.

This does not mean that KRII has visions of becoming another America Online or Microsoft Network. Explained Tierney, "We don't see ourselves as wanting to compete on the consumer side" with services such as America Online or CompuServe. "We don't see our-

selves selling directly to consumers." Instead KRII uses third parties to reach and distribute DIALOG content to consumers. CompuServe now manages and provides access to Knowledge Index, DIALOG's after-hours, easier-to-use online system. DIALOG's BusinessBase, a GUI business information service, will be available on the Microsoft Network.

The Internet is "good news for us," said Tierney. He believes the online business will be bigger in 1996 because of the Internet and, specifically, the World Wide Web. Not only does KRII use the DIALOG homepage for public relations, distributing system news, and system documentation, it has some end user products distributed only on the web. ScienceBase is a web product that provides access to sci-tech content via a Netscape browser. More such products are likely.

Where do libraries fit in?

Currently 96 to 97 percent of KRII customers are librarians or other information professionals. Tierney says that percentage "will go down a bit but will remain our primary focus."

KRII works mostly with libraries and information centers—with academic libraries, public libraries, or with companies that have the infrastructure of an information center. According to Trudell, KRII "partners with information professionals to get to the knowledge user." Company representatives find it much easier to work with one key person in an organization to develop a variety of online, CD-ROM, and customized front-end products for everyone within that organization. Trudell said she believes that her recently created position as VP of information professional market development reflects her belief that "the information professional is at the heart of our strategy."

Where will Knight-Ridder shop next? More small, aggressive companies like PLS and Individual, Inc., for sure. Since librarians are such an integral part of KRII's strategy, we need to make sure we let the company know what directions we'd like to see it take.

For more information, contact Knight-Ridder Information, Inc., 2440 El Camino Rd., Mountain View, CA 94040; 800-334-2564; 415-254-7000.

[In my October column, the E-mail address to subscribe to LIBREF-L was printed incorrectly. The correct address is LISTSERV@KENTVM.KENT.EDU.]

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