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## Reference Services from RLG

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# LJ INFOTECH ONLINE DATABASES

BY CAROL TENOPIR

## Reference Services from RLG

IF YOU READ this column regularly you might have the impression that OCLC is the only shared cataloging service that offers reference options. This is patently untrue. The Research Libraries Group (RLG) offers a variety of search services to support reference functions in the library, and you do not have to be a member of RLG to use its services.

Just as OCLC is best known for its bibliographic database, WorldCat, RLG is best known for its Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), the massive bibliographic database and related services originally developed for shared cataloging. In the last few years RLG has added CitaDel, an online search system that provides access to indexing/abstracting databases; and Zephyr, a Z39.50 server that makes the RLIN and CitaDel databases searchable through a library's online catalog. RLG also offers document delivery connections, including Ariel and Internet-based document delivery software, for a full complement of online reference support for academic and public libraries.

### RLIN's unique focus

RLIN goes back nearly two decades to the early days of shared cataloging systems. RLG members (148 research libraries, archives, and museums) have pooled their resources to create the bibliographic database, which today describes nearly 25 million distinct titles in about 69 million bibliographic records.

The RLIN main database includes bibliographic information describing books, serials, maps, computer files, visual materials, recordings, scores, and archives and manuscripts. It is separated into eight files (corresponding to these material types) for searching, cat-

aloging, acquisitions, and interlibrary loan. For reference use, the eight are joined into one huge RLIN BIB file.

RLIN's unique focus comes from the research orientation of most of the RLG member libraries and contributors. RLIN records come from many university libraries and agencies such as the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, the Government Printing Office, the British Library, and the United Nations.

The contributions of many specialized research collections bring a strong humanities emphasis to the RLIN database. With input from the Folger Shakespeare Library, the New York Public Library, the Virginia State Library and Archives, the New-York Historical Society, the Art Institute of Chicago, the American Antiquarian Society, the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, the database is a humanities treasure trove. RLIN has placed particular emphasis on archives and manuscripts, as well as records to materials in non-Latin scripts.

In addition to the bibliographic files, RLIN contains several special information files. Authority files include name and subject authority files. The Art and Architecture Thesaurus from the Getty Art History Information Program is online. The English Short Title Catalogue describes English-language materials printed from 1473 to 1800; SCIOPIO, the Art Sales Catalog Database, describes catalogs from rare book sales and art auctions; and the RLG Conspectus Online provides comparative subject data about libraries' or archives' collections.

### CitaDel

RLG became more of a force in reference services in 1992 when it launched CitaDel, which goes beyond the description and cataloging of vast collections by providing access to commercial indexing and abstracting databases and document delivery services. It retains RLIN's focus on research support, with strengths in social science and humanities research.

Launched with ten bibliographic databases, CitaDel now offers twice that

number, including some general interest files and some specialized ones. Many of the databases are well-known general interest offerings that can be found on other online systems, including ABI/Inform, Ei Page One (Engineering Index), Newspaper Abstracts, Periodical Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts, PAIS, U.S. Government Periodicals, and Life Sciences. Other files designated general interest by RLG are Inside Information, which provides tables-of-contents from the 10,000 most requested titles in the British Library Document Supply Centre's collection; Environmental Sciences and Pollution Management; Scientific Conference Papers; and Marine Biology.

CitaDel's specialized databases include Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, Handbook of Latin American Studies, Hispanic American Periodicals Index, Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals, and World Law Index, Part 1: Index to Hispanic Legislation. Exclusive access is offered to Anthropological Literature and History of Science and Technology.

The CitaDel service began as a way to save libraries the cost and trouble of tape leasing and local loading. Recognizing that the hardware, staff, and software support required for tape loading makes it cost-effective or desirable for only a few libraries, CitaDel offers an alternative for institutionwide end user database searching. Even though tape loading has become popular in the last few years, many libraries are realizing that it is much more desirable to let someone else do the loading and maintenance work.

### CitaDel's pricing

Libraries pay a fixed annual fee for each of the CitaDel databases selected. The cost is based on the number of simultaneous users allowed but offers unlimited searching of the database by those users. For access over the Internet there is no additional telecommunications fee. This pricing structure provides a way for libraries to offer end user online searching throughout a library or library system at no charge to the user, but the annual fees are not trivial.

Costs for CitaDel access vary, but



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## ONLINE DATABASES

here are some examples. For noncommercial users without access to RLIN BIB, CitaDel's General Interest files range in price from \$1900 per year for U.S. Government Periodicals Index to \$6600 per year for Ei Page One, to \$21,170 for ABI/Inform. These are low-end costs for up to five simultaneous users each. Costs go up for each additional five simultaneous users to a high of \$44,900 for the capability of 25 simultaneous users on ABI/Inform. Most of the other general interest files are in the \$7000-\$12,000 range per year for up to five users—including \$8300 for PAIS, \$11,650 for Periodical Abstracts or Newspaper Abstracts, and \$10,400 for Life Sciences or \$8000 for Marine Biology.

Special interest files (Avery Index, Anthropological Literature, etc.) cost between \$750 and \$1510 each per year for up to five simultaneous users. The cost goes up \$400-\$600 for each additional five simultaneous users.

### Discounts for RLIN subscribers

There are substantial discounts for both general interest and special interest databases when you also buy access to the RLIN databases. If your library is not a member of RLG, access to the RLIN BIB file and Inside Information is \$36,000 per year for up to five simultaneous users. The fee goes up for every five additional users to a high of \$153,000 per year for 25 simultaneous users. RLIN searches can also be billed per search and purchased in search blocks. Depending on the number of searches you commit to, per search prices for nonmembers vary from 53¢ to 90¢ each.

As of May 1, RLG is making a special subscription offer to new users. For under \$10,000 for 12 months of use, new RLIN BIB subscribers can access that database with up to two simultaneous users. RLG is targeting this offer specifically to current OCLC FirstSearch users, maintaining they need both systems.

With a subscription to the RLIN BIB file, the cost of CitaDel special interest files comes down to \$500 per year (from between \$750 and \$1510) for each file for up to five simultaneous users (or \$475 for RLG members). Costs increase by \$200 for each additional five simultaneous users vs. a \$400-\$600 jump for those without the RLIN BIB file subscription.

The fees for general interest files are also reduced for RLIN BIB subscribers. ABI/Inform comes down to \$14,570 per year for up to five users, from \$21,170;

Ei Page One comes down to \$4700 for noncommercial users, from \$6600; PAIS is \$4100, down from \$8300; Newspaper Abstracts is \$7930 and Periodical Abstracts is \$8150, both down from \$11,650; Life Sciences is \$8400 from \$10,400; and Marine Biology is \$6800 vs. \$8000.

### Eureka

Since September 1993, CitaDel and RLIN databases are easy for end users to search. Eureka does for CitaDel and RLIN what OCLC's FirstSearch does for OCLC EPIC and WorldCat. It is an easy-to-use search system that opens up online searching to a wide variety of libraries

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and library users. In its first 16 months of use, Eureka logged 2.19 million searches. As of March 1995, 84 institutions and five consortia subscribe to one or more databases through Eureka. Eureka is based on the ANSI standard for Common Command Language (Z39.58), but it is more forgiving than most command systems. If you just put in the first part or first letter of a command, Eureka will lead you by the hand to complete the search process. Users can alternate between the prompting mode and entering full commands if they know them. This allows the Eureka system to grow with users as they learn how to search the system; it doesn't get tedious like many menu-based systems.

According to Walt Crawford, lead designer for Eureka, "RLG's goal is for a typical library user to be able to complete a search within two to four minutes after first seeing Eureka, without printed documentation or prior instruction." System statistics show this goal is being met. Once a month Crawford analyzes Eureka sessions and finds that most fall within the one to two minute or three to four minute range.

He also analyzes error patterns and finds that "most people don't get confused" when they search. After studying errors and the suggestions sent by users, RLG's Eureka development team imple-

mented several system enhancements last June. Errors by Eureka users dropped from two percent of input to between .33 and .5 percent and are now mostly misspellings. Even misspellings may not be fatal since the system was altered to look at just the first three letters of a command.

Eureka is not a fancy system—it displays straight textual information in terminal emulation mode so it can run on the lowest-end hardware. All of the search functions are taking place at RLG and sent over your CompuServe or Internet connection. Eureka is a simple and straightforward (and effective) way for libraries to offer end user access to research databases.

### Zephyr

The CitaDel and RLIN databases can also be accessed through a library's online catalog software if it supports an ANSI standard Z39.50 connection. Zephyr is RLG's Z39.50 client/server system that allows searching of databases using the same search methods as the library catalog with your OPAC (online patron access catalog) as client to the Zephyr server. Libraries that use Zephyr usually set up a menu choice in their catalogs that links users to the RLIN or CitaDel databases to which the library subscribes. Fewer than 30 libraries currently use Zephyr, but they logged more than one million searches through December 1994.

Online ordering of documents is offered with several of the CitaDel databases. Subscribers to ABI/Inform, Ei Page One, Inside Information, Newspaper Abstracts, Periodical Abstracts, and U.S. Government Periodicals Index may order documents during an online session. The library can decide if documents are to be sent directly to a user or to the interlibrary loan department and whether they should be billed to the user's credit card or to the library. Delivery is normally provided within 24 to 48 hours via FAX or air mail.

If FAX or mail are too outdated for you, RLG also offers document transmission via the Internet. The Ariel service transmits page images of scanned documents from one of more than 400 Ariel sites to another. The 300-dpi quality is better than FAX, and transmission is faster.

For more information about any of the products or services from RLG, contact The Research Libraries Group, Inc., 1200 Villa St., Mountain View, CA 94041-1100; 800-537-RLIN; FAX 415-964-0943; or E-mail: bl.sal@rlg.stanford.edu.