



12-1-1990

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Carol Tenopir
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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Tenopir, Carol, "Librarians as an Online Sales Force" (1990). *School of Information Sciences -- Faculty Publications and Other Works*.

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□ ONLINE DATABASES □

BY CAROL TENOPIR

Librarians as an Online Sales Force

IN HIS ARTICLE "In Search of the Elusive End User," Dialog President Roger Summit says that while only 12 percent of DIALOG's current overall usage is by end users, he expects "that within the next five years, end users will account for some 60 percent of our customers and will grow to between 20 and 25 percent of overall usage" (*Online Review*, December 1989, p. 489-490).

How will this happen? While DIALOG and other online systems continue to improve user interface design, the big push to increase end user participation will come from marketing—with companies using librarians as a sales force to "sell" the value of online services.

Dialog's new explorers

Early this year, Dialog started an aggressive marketing program aimed at the corporate information professional. Its "New Explorers" offers a free "Outreach Marketing Kit" useful whether, in Dialog's words, "you're planning a presentation to management, to a department not yet using electronic information, or if you're simply interested in spreading the good word about your library's products and services." Dialog will supply brochures, fliers, quick reference cards, posters, database catalogs, and glossy covers to dress up sample searches. In addition, Dialog has a videotape and a slide show specially designed for the corporate market and will provide demonstration passwords or a 30-day free trial of its Ondisc products.

The videotape dramatizes the process of businesspeople tracking down information they need before launching a new product. They locate online facts about competitors, man-

ufacturing processes, patents, and human experts. The tape never mentions which sources the people are accessing; instead it emphasizes the general process and the ease of finding things online as part of the intense/ongoing information needs of business.

When I showed the videotape to a group, they immediately identified with the researchers and got caught up in the evening TV soap opera-like presentation. One person commented that he wanted to know what was going to happen "next" to the people in the videotape! Group members didn't have a very clear idea of what the DIALOG service was, even after viewing the tape, but they did know they wanted to have access to it. The tape refers viewers to Dialog or its company information center for more information. I think the tape would be most effective if the corporate librarian views it with a group in order to answer questions immediately and provide more information.

Librarians may want to promote end user searching of the full online system, to be used instead of or in conjunction with intermediary searching, but more likely will be promoting the easier-to-use services aimed at the end user. Dialog's Corporate Connection, Business Connection, and Medical Connection are menu-driven systems that provide access to selected databases and are geared to producing the type of reports and output most needed by their targeted end users. Dialog urges librarians to provide free demonstrations of the Connection service and act as the central point for training, assigning passwords, and troubleshooting for people in the organization who use the systems for their own information needs.

Dialog kicked off this new marketing focus in the December 1989 issue of *Inside Business*, its newsletter for business searchers. The issue challenged professional searchers to begin "adventures in marketing." It enticed librarians with the idea of a treasure to be won: "The pot of gold?

Enhanced professional stature for yourself, and growth and success for your organization through better access to information. You may well ask: What does it take to be a real outreach marketing champion? The answer is simple: A decision to begin the adventure—and creative and aggressive use of the tools at hand."

For a copy of the newsletter or Outreach Marketing kit, contact Dialog Marketing, 3460 Hillview Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304; 800-334-2564; 415-858-3785.

Mead Data Central's NEXIS

Conceived first as an end user service, Mead is attempting to woo the professional searcher, while services like DIALOG have been trying to reach end users. Like Dialog, Mead has started a new "expanded support program" that encourages special librarians to market online services within their organizations. The expanded support includes free seminars and a free workbook that provide ideas for marketing the information center. Mead will provide handouts, instructional materials, software, and coupons for free searches in selected NEXIS databases.

Mead's new general Professional Development seminars supplement its NEXIS system's "Nuts and Bolts," "Update," and "Refresher" seminars. The new seminars are designed to help information center specialists by concentrating on the information librarian's need to know to market the library, to market intermediary search services, and to train and support end user searchers. According to Corilee Christou of Mead Data Central, "We try to act as facilitators to bring corporate librarians together. We provide them with a forum to share ideas. The idea is not to market NEXIS, but to help corporate librarians market themselves as the value-added resource. We help librarians get a marketing perspective, necessary to be a player in the corporate library workplace."

In July 1990, NEXIS asked special librarians for feedback on what



Carol Tenopir is Associate Professor at the School of Library and Information Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu

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they would like to see included in the NEXIS seminars in the future. The most popular of the professional development seminars is "Marketing the Information Center: A Blueprint for Action," accredited by the Special Libraries Association. NEXIS has presented this free seminar to many local chapters of SLA. Other seminars include: "Into the '90's: Changing Role of the Information Professional"; "Communicating Effectively Within Your Organization: How To Influence the Right People the Right Way"; "Painless PC: Introduction to Basic PC DOS Commands, Downloading and Uploading Features, etc."; and "Train the Trainer: Designed for Those Information Professionals Who Are Responsible for Training End Users on the NEXIS Service." The seminars are taught by Mead employees with MLS degrees.

Another aspect of Mead's new focus on librarians is its much-improved classroom instruction plan. Unlike services such as DIALOG, BRS, ORBIT, and WILSONLINE, Mead Data Central had not done

much to attract the library school instructional market. Its fixed-fee scale for law schools was prohibitively expensive for most library schools, and the initial educational rate for library schools did not provide access to useful databases.

Mead's new educational plan offers access to almost all of the NEXIS, LEXIS, and MEDIS databases under a choice of four different payment plans. Three plans are monthly all-you-can-use plans. Mead also offers a \$15 per hour instructional account, just as the other major online services have done for a long time. These new plans will help ensure Mead that the new generation of special librarians will be familiar with NEXIS as well as with the more traditional intermediary search services.

For more information about the marketing seminars or corporate library support, contact Corilee Christou, Mead Data Central, 9393 Springboro Pike, PO Box 933, Dayton, OH 45401; 800-227-9597. For more information about educational accounts, contact Geri Simpson.

NLM, a pioneer

The National Library of Medicine was the pioneer in courses in training the information professional to assist end user searching. Over six years ago, NLM offered its "train the trainer" seminar so medical librarians could learn how to teach health professionals how to search the full MEDLARS system. The program was discontinued because medical librarians discovered that most of their potential end users found the command-driven system too complex. This year NLM started a new train-the-trainer seminar, this time for its easy front-end package "Grateful Med."

Frequent searcher awards

Database producers are also getting into new marketing approaches for their professional searchers. One innovative, and somewhat controversial, approach offered by Information Access Company takes off from the airlines' frequent flier award programs. Connect time credits or gifts are awarded to searchers when they become frequent searchers on any IAC databases.

This isn't exactly the same as Dialog's New Explorers, since one of the main motivations in the frequent searcher program is for IAC to find out exactly who its big customers are and to encourage the professional searcher to select IAC files over similar ones from a competitor. Still, such programs have the effect of encouraging more use within an organization or department that may include end users as well as intermediaries.

Searchers or departments that use an average of one hour or more per month on IAC databases may enroll in the Instant Access Club. IAC asks members to send their monthly online invoices so the company can credit the online time. When award levels are reached, members may choose to receive a gift from the Instant Access Club catalog or a connect credit check made out to their organization. There are four award levels, ranging from three to six hours per year to over 15 hours per year (hours may not be carried over from year to year). Award levels may be reached by searching on any combination of the 15 IAC databases. The gift catalog looks like any shopping catalog; it is full of personal items such as jewelry, small appliances, household objects, sports equipment, tools, etc.

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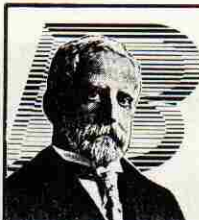


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STOCK — and — TRADE

A Potpourri of Industry Information
and Observation From R.R. Bowker

The holidays are here, a new selling season has begun, and everyone still feels, well, lousy. Taxes are up, services are down, and a recessionary gloom fills the air. Before indulging in too many Scrooge-like sentiments, let's remember that Christmas and Hanukkah are really for kids. And when it comes to children, the book world has much reason to celebrate. Here are a few figures from the *1990-91 Bowker Annual Library and Book Trade Almanac* and other Bowker sources to help you approach the upcoming festivities with a certain "youthful" enthusiasm.

MORE JUVENILE TITLES IN PRINT

According to *Children's Books in Print*, nearly 8,000 more juvenile books were available in 1990 than in 1989. The growth of in-print titles (from 58,616 to 66,268, to be precise) is especially impressive considering the volatility of a market in which the number of books going out-of-print often rivals the number of new publications each year.

MORE JUVENILE BOOK SALES

The AAP's estimated sales for juvenile paperbacks and hardbacks in 1989 reached 901 million, an increase of about 20% from the 1988 total of 751 million. That's double the already substantial growth rate of 10.9% registered for book sales overall.

MORE JUVENILE BOOK COVERAGE

Based on counts from the leading book review media, the number of reviews focusing on juvenile titles increased 4%, from 8,619 in 1988 to 8,982 in 1989. Among the three journals devoted exclusively to children's literature, both *Horn Book* and *School Library Journal* extended coverage by an even wider margin—29% and 10%, respectively.

Finally, despite the deficit and the Gramm-Rudman spending cuts, there's even some good news from the government. One of the programs most widely supported by the AAP, the Even Start literacy initiative, was granted 24 million dollars in 1990—up \$10 million from the previous year. --Valerie Berk

advertisement

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According to Sally Froud, associate marketing manager of IAC's Online Services, "The goal of the club is to insure that frequent searchers of IAC's databases have our most current search materials and are aware of the most recent news about our databases." Club members get lots of mailings from IAC about new databases and changes to old ones. In addition, club members receive substantial discounts on IAC search manuals.

Almost all of the club members are corporate librarians, with over 200 members enrolled in the first year and a half. Froud says the "reaction has been very positive" and new members are joining all the time. "Just like with the airlines programs, people like to get something" for their work, Froud says. If a librarian feels uncomfortable accepting a personal gift, he or she may choose the option of a check made out to the company.

For more information about the IAC Instant Access Club, contact Sally Froud, Information Access Co., 362 Lakeside Dr., Foster City, CA 94404; 415-378-5000; 800-227-8431.

A matter of ethics?

Are frequent searcher programs and the like ethical? If a corporate librarian chooses an IAC database over another that may be just as appropriate for a question is it (intentionally or not) because of the lure of logging more connect time?

I must admit that I have paid a little bit more or flown at inconvenient times when I was trying to build up enough miles for a free trip. Is it less ethical to take a wristwatch or billfold from IAC for searching done on the job?

Doctors were soundly criticized when drug companies started "frequent prescriber" clubs; are we different? Is it "selling out" to take materials or free passwords from an online vendor?

There are no easy answers, but most librarians welcome this renewed attention to our needs and the recognition of the important role played by the information professional. Many librarians are saying it's about time we were getting the help and recognition from online vendors and from database producers that we deserve!

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