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Carol Tenopir
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

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Database Directories: In Print & Now Online

By Carol Tenopir

SINCE THE publication of the first database directory in 1976 (edited by Martha E. Williams and Sandra Rouse and published by the American Society for Information Science), printed directories have been the major formal source for finding out what databases are available on a particular topic. Other than a searcher's experience, these printed reference works have continued to be the main way searchers find out what databases are available from a variety of online vendors. (Online search aids such as DIALOG's *DIALINDEX*, *BRS/CROSS*, or SDC's *Database Index* include only those databases available on their respective systems.)

Recently several developments have brought database directories into the spotlight again. These developments include: a new version of an established directory for information professionals, an additional directory for professional searchers, an increase in the number of directories aimed at end user or subject target audiences, and, the most exciting development, online access to the three most complete directories.

This month's column concentrates on the three directories that are aimed at information professionals, available in new up-to-date printed editions, and are all now also available online.

Williams directory

Computer-Readable Databases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook (Martha E. Williams, editor-in-chief) is a comprehensive compendium of all types of databases. Many librarians are familiar with the earlier one-volume editions of this work that focused on word-oriented databases (biblio-

graphic, full text, directory, etc.). The new 1985 edition, published by ALA, expands coverage to include numeric databases as well. The directory is in two volumes; price, \$157.50.

One volume contains listings for databases in science, technology, and medicine; the second volume includes business, law, humanities, and social sciences. Together, the two volumes describe over 2800 databases. Only publicly available databases in computer-readable form are included (most, but not all, are online). General interest databases (e.g., magazines, newspapers, biographical information) are placed in the second volume. Multidisciplinary databases that contain material of interest to users of either volume are placed in both volumes "so that each volume is a complete and separate entity." Although page numbers run consecutively through the text in the two volumes, each volume includes the complete set of indexes. This increases the directory's size, but is a handy feature for users.

Computer-Readable Databases is a massive work that provides a wealth of information on each database. For each database the following basic information is listed: name of database, including acronym, former name, and former acronym; producer; frequency of updates; time span covered by most materials in the database; approximate number of items in the database as of December 1984; average number of items added each year; corresponding print products if any; language of the database; and organizations (vendors) that make the database available online. Some database entries contain additional basic information about batch availability, licensing of the database tapes, geographic coverage, sources of the data, or special features.

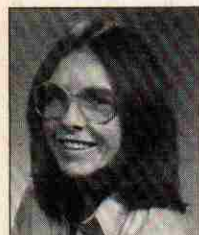
In addition to basic information, there is a one- or two-paragraph description of the subject matter and scope of each database. Indexing, coding, or classification used in the database are listed also, as are basic record structures for bibliographic databases. Finally, most entries for word-oriented databases mention what user aids are available.

Four indexes make up the last 286 pages of each volume. The Name Index refers to all current and former names as well as acronyms. The thorough Subject Index includes 36 broad controlled categories as well as over 500 noncontrolled keywords taken from the database descriptions. The Producer Index lists names and addresses of the producers of all of the databases in the directory. Each entry gives the names of all databases produced by that agency. The Processor Index gives names and addresses of all vendors of the databases in the directory, along with an alphabetical list of databases they make available. (The DIALOG Information Services Inc. entry goes on for four and one-half columns.)

Computer-Readable Databases has the broadest scope of the database directories. It contains batch as well as online, international as well as U.S., foreign language as well as English, and numeric as well as word-oriented databases. It is also the largest in terms of sheer size and number of pages.

Online version

This directory will be available on DIALOG as file 230 in late summer of this year. No price had been set as of this writing but, according to Martha Williams, it "will be low, one of the lowest" priced files on DIALOG. Updates will be every two or three months. Producer addresses will not be



Carol Tenopir is Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Library Studies, University of Hawaii, Manoa

in the online version. The lengthy, descriptive Subject Matter and Scope field will be especially useful for online free-searching.

Cuadra directory

The second oldest comprehensive database directory for online professionals has been continuously issued on a subscription basis since 1979. *Directory of Online Databases*, published by Cuadra Associates, Inc., is issued quarterly; price, \$95/year or \$180/two years. Twice a year a complete master volume is issued. In between complete volumes, subscribers receive a supplement that fits in the back of the master volume. Future plans call for including the subject index in the supplement volumes.

The Spring 1985 issue includes entries for over 2760 "reference" (bibliographic or referral) or "source" databases (numeric, textual-numeric, full text, software) made available by 414 online services around the world. Only databases that are publicly available online through a telecommunications network are included, but emphasis is worldwide.

Like the other directories, the Cuadra directory has a main section that is arranged alphabetically by database name. Concise information for each database includes: name of database; type (reference or source and specific type, e.g., bibliographic); one or more broad subject terms from a controlled list; producer; online vendors; conditions for gaining access to the database (e.g., subscription required); narrative description of the content, including subject, coverage, scope, and printed equivalents; language; geographic coverage; time span; and update frequency.

A second section lists names, addresses, phone numbers, and telex numbers for database producers and online vendors.

The third section is composed of five indexes. There is a conventional Subject Index, a Producer Index that lists all databases created by each producer, and an Online Service Index that lists all databases available via a vendor. Unique to this directory is a Telecommunications Index listing all the telecommunications networks that can be used to access each online service vendor. The fifth is a Master Index that lists all databases, producers, and online vendors and refers back to the appropriate Producer or Online Service Index.

Because it is quarterly, *Directory of Online Databases* is the most continuously up-to-date of the printed database directories. Until the online availability of directories, this was as up-to-date as you could get for database directory information.

Online version

This directory too will soon be online, via "several online vendors" to be announced by Cuadra Associates this summer. Updates will be twice a year "at a minimum." Producer and vendor addresses will be part of the online record, with a print option on most systems to get the addresses only if they are desired.

In addition to the online databases, Cuadra Associates leases a machine-readable version of the entire directory for mounting on an organization's computer for in-house use. Also, there are plans to make subsets of directory data available on floppy disks for use on a microcomputer. Details of this joint venture between Cuadra Associates and Elsevier Science Publishing Company (New York) will be announced later. For further information contact Cuadra at 2001 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 305, Santa Monica, CA 90403.

KIPI-ASIS directory

The newest comprehensive directory, and the first to go online, is the *Data Base Directory*, published by Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc. in cooperation with the American Society for Information Science. The first edition was issued in the fall of 1984; a new edition will be ready in September of 1985. Plans are for future editions to be issued twice a year.

One issue of the directory plus a six-month subscription to the monthly newsletter *Data Base Alert* costs \$120. A yearly subscription, including two issues of the directory and 12 issues of *Data Base Alert*, is \$215.

Like the other two directories, *Data Base Directory* includes information on all types of textual, bibliographic, referral, and numeric databases on all subjects. The first edition especially concentrates on those databases available online in the United States and/or Canada. Selected foreign databases are included, the new edition promising to contain many more European entries. Approximately 2100 total databases will be included in the new edition.

The printed directory begins with an index to alternate and preferred names for databases (including acronyms and former names). The database listing follows, arranged alphabetically by the preferred name of each database. Information about each database includes: database name including alternate name, former name, acronym; up to six subject headings supplied by the database producer; a short narrative summary of the content and scope; corresponding printed sources; availability of enhanced subject access through subject headings, classification, etc.; name of the producer and special services provided; database "data" including file size, update fre-

quency, approximate number of records added each year, inclusive dates, database type, and types of documents covered in the database; online vendor and price information for each; original data sources; language; restrictions and conditions of availability; telecommunications networks; and search aids available.

The pricing information often includes database charges plus the average price of a "typical" search. This is the only one of the three directories to include this information.

Data Base Directory has three indexes. The Vendor Index gives the name and address of each online vendor plus a list of databases available through that vendor. The Producer Index does the same for all database producers. Finally, the Subject Index provides broad subject access to the databases (although it lists only the database names and not the directory page numbers where the databases can be found).

Online version

Online access through Knowledge Industry Publication's own in-house computer system has been available since late 1984 for a fee of \$60 per hour. Of more use to most searchers is the BRS version, available online since June 1985. File *KIPD (Knowledge Industry Publication Database)* on BRS has a royalty rate of \$25 per hour. The online file is essentially the same as the printed directory's database listing with producer addresses included as a separate data paragraph. The file will be updated monthly. Magnetic tapes of the entire directory are also available for lease from Knowledge Industry.

Conclusion

Online versions of these three comprehensive database directories promise new uses for their valuable information. Searchers can not only discover what databases are available on a subject or from a producer, they can gather more complex information by using the powers of Boolean logic and free text searching. The narrative database descriptions contained in each directory combined with the shorter controlled fields offer many searching possibilities.

Both the print and online versions of these three directories are valuable tools for online searchers, and the new up-to-date versions provide an almost overwhelming amount of information on databases and systems worldwide. These three directories are the best, most complete, and now the most versatile database tools of the nearly 30 database directories on the market. Next month's column will discuss some of the other printed database directories currently available.

