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## Customizing Bibliographic Databases for the End User

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## Customizing Bibliographic Databases for the End User

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A current trend in the 1990's is for institutions to provide access to information to their constituents on internal search systems. This afternoon, I will tell you about BIOSIS' commitment to supporting these organizations as they customize their interface in order to maximize search effectiveness on our database. As an example, I will describe our cooperation with the University of California for the load of *BIOSIS Previews* on their multi-campus MELVYL® system.

First, I will give a brief introduction to BIOSIS: its mission, goals, and coverage, for those who may not be familiar with our company. I will discuss our education goals and describe our cooperation with the University of California staff as they loaded *BIOSIS Previews* on the MELVYL system, including online help screens and features added, and our ongoing educational support. I will close with a short demonstration of searching *BIOSIS Previews* on the MELVYL system.

BIOSIS, now in its 70th year, is an international information service established in 1926 in Philadelphia, as an independent, not-for-profit organization to assist life scientists in accessing the world's literature. We provide comprehensive coverage of published research in life science literature from journals, books, meetings, and monographs, and to make this information available in formats required by life scientists worldwide. Our mission is to be the information organizer for life science research and to serve the needs of researchers in all settings.

BIOSIS' core publications are *Biological Abstracts* (*BA*) and *Biological Abstracts/RRM* (*Reports, Reviews, Meetings*) (*BA/RRM*). These publications are available in print and compact disc format and are combined to form the online database, *BIOSIS Previews*, which is available through several vendor systems as well as for lease to load on site. The database is growing and BIOSIS will add more than 550,000 records in 1996. We currently review 6,000 journals originating in more than 100 countries for material to include in the database. Fifty-one percent of the serials originate in Europe and the Middle East; 31%, in North America.

BIOSIS subject coverage is comprehensive for all published research areas of biology and biomedicine. In addition to traditional fields such as plant, animal, microbial, and human research, BIOSIS also offers broad coverage of medical studies, emerging fields, such as biotechnology, and the many interdisciplinary fields which intersect with the life sciences, such as biochemistry, biophysics, and bioengineering. Current research in the life sciences also has implications important to sociology, ethics, and legislative considerations.

BIOSIS has a strong commitment to educate our users and help them keep up with the almost constant emergence of new formats and software options. Since 1965, we have provided free seminars and workshops for thousands of users. Our goals are to:

- aid information professionals in their efforts to keep up with advances in technology and new products
- help researchers get relevant information from our databases
- educate end-users as to what topics they can expect to find in BIOSIS databases, and how and when to use our databases
- work with vendors and tape lease customers to ensure that the combination of their software with our data results in effective and powerful searching.

Staff from BIOSIS and the University of California Division of Library Automation (DLA) combined technical and educational expertise for the load of *BIOSIS Previews* onto the University's MELVYL system. In May of 1995, I met with UC staff from DLA to discuss the load, review BIOSIS file documentation, outline MELVYL system features, and discuss user aids and training of UC staff. In the succeeding months, I worked closely with DLA staff and the librarians serving on the UC BIOSIS Campus Task Force in order to implement MELVYL system features which best facilitate searches of the *BIOSIS Previews* database. DLA set up a remailer to facilitate the frequent communications among team members.

In December, 1995, an internal test database of 50,000 records from 1988-1995 was made available to DLA staff, the UC BIOSIS Campus Task Force, and BIOSIS staff. In March, 1996, DLA loaded the BIOSIS 1993-present segment of the database into the MELVYL system's experimental mode for testing searchable fields and help screens. The Task Force, DLA, and BIOSIS did extensive testing of the file and the detailed help screens.

In April, DLA, the Task Force, and BIOSIS staff met via a conference call to review and resolve any questions and concerns regarding the file load and to make plans for BIOSIS on-site training at each of the nine campuses of the university.

The committee completed its final review, and the file was released into the MELVYL system command mode at the end of May. Five million records from 1988-present are now available for use by faculty, students, librarians, and other employees of the University of California from their dormitories, offices, and laboratories at any time they want to search.

When implementing the search interface for *BIOSIS Previews*, DLA staff added MELVYL system features. These include:

- online help screens
- special display format to simplify the loading of records into file management software
- a link from records retrieved to local university holdings
- quick ways to e-mail search results to local mail boxes
- easy ways to update searches automatically as new data is added four times a month

 compatible search features to facilitate cross-file searching with other MELVYL system databases

This synergistic relationship between BIOSIS and the university also lead to the implementation of several special features which optimized searching for unique indexing characteristics of the *BIOSIS Previews* database, including:

- addition of special limits for retrieving highly posted subjects and organism groups, such as biochemistry topics and humans
- addition of publication types to allow faster retrieval for specific literature types, such as national and international conferences, books, and reviews.
- limit to specific types of reviews important to specific life science groups such as taxonomy reviews and case reviews
- addition of a publication type to facilitate retrieving molecular sequence
- addition of special educational aids such as the Concept Code Finder Lists to assist users in identifying broad subject codes to further refine their searches
- availability of online taxonomic hierarchical listings and Super Taxa terms available for retrieving related groups of organisms

Once the database was in experimental mode, BIOSIS arranged a visit to each of the nine university campuses in April, 1996 to train library staff, from main as well as science and medical libraries, who will train and consult other searchers. We organized a workbook illustrating our indexes with recommendations for search strategy design on the MELVYL system. We also will assist in developing workbooks as well as quick references for educating end-users.

Long-range plans include direct education of researchers and students, such as doing presentations for classes and on special-interest topics for researchers.

I will demonstrate two searches to illustrate MELVYL commands for searching key subjects in *BIOSIS Previews*.

I have described BIOSIS' mission, our goals for serving life scientists information needs, our educational and support programs, and our cooperative program with the University of California staff to load *BIOSIS Previews* on the MELVYL system. BIOSIS is committed to provide ongoing user education and support to assist librarians and end-users to retrieve needed information.