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Norman Desmarais
Providence College

Judy Luther
The Faxon Company

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Innovations Affecting Us

New Pricing Structures

Column Editors: **Norman Desmarais** (Providence College)
Judy Luther (The Faxon Company)

With this issue, we welcome Norman Desmarais to our staff of contributing editors of ATG. Norm is a prolific writer who has taken the time to send us some innovations for this column as well as a look at selecting multimedia software (see this issue, page 30). Thank you, Norm, and welcome! — KS

In April, **SilverPlatter** began introducing new prices, starting with many of its most popular information products. The company hopes the new pricing strategy will be fair and equitable, easily understood, technology independent, predictable, and easily budgeted. It says that the new pricing strategy is based on customer feedback which indicates that customers prefer pricing based on simultaneous users as well as network access of databases.

The new pricing structure:

- 1) defines terms such as "simultaneous user," "remote access," and "site";
- 2) creates flexible usage pricing points including: Single networked user; Two to four simultaneous users; Five to eight simultaneous users; Nine to twelve simultaneous users; Site license; Remote access (dial-in)
- 3) strives to be media independent.

SilverPlatter says that most of its databases fit into this new strategy easily. However, there may be exceptions, depending on the characteristics of a specific database. Before any new prices take effect, SilverPlatter will have informed its customers of all aspects of the new pricing strategy, including definition of terms to ensure complete understanding of all points.

The announcement provoked a good deal of discussion on the CD-ROM LAN and SPIRS-L listservs on the Internet. (SPIRS-L is operated by SilverPlatter.) The main points of controversy focus around two issues: the price points for two to four and five to eight simultaneous users and remote access. Several people prefer eliminating the two categories and propose a category of two to eight simultaneous users with prices set at the two to four simultaneous users level.

Those discussing the issue of remote access argue that separate pricing for this type of access is irrelevant and violates SilverPlatter's principle of technology independence. They claim that simultaneous user licenses should suffice. Through usage metering, the type of access becomes irrelevant. Why should a library pay more just because it provides access to a user dialing in from home or from an office or from a building across campus? The issue, they say, is the number of users who access the system — not how they get access. SilverPlatter has not yet made an official response to these concerns.

Dialog Information Services, Inc., which doubles the price of its CD-ROM databases for two to ten users, announced the availability of DIALOG ERA (Electronic Redistribution and Archiving). DIALOG ERA is the first and only online copyright compliance service and the first online service to offer standardized terms and conditions of use for data coming from many different information providers (some information providers have additional terms and conditions).

DIALOG ERA lets information users make sure their internal redistribution and electronic storage activities com-

ply with copyright law. By paying a fee based upon the intended use, information consumers can avoid litigation and fines. They can also order additional paper copies or purchase the right to make additional electronic or paper copies of search results for redistribution within their organization.

DIALOG ERA also makes it possible to purchase the right to archive records electronically from the more than 250 databases participating in the service. By combining the right to store records electronically on an in-house system with the ability to purchase the right to make electronic or paper copies of records, DIALOG makes it possible for anyone in a customer's organization to access the stored records via electronic mail or via an internal network and legally make copies for their own use.

Customers can get access to DIALOG ERA via commands, through the DIALOG Alert current awareness service, and soon through the DIALOG Menus. They can combine DIALOG output commands with the DIALOG ERA options or use these options on their own for records already received from DIALOG. Those interested in more information should contact their account representatives. ☛

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