November 1994

Innovations Affecting Us / Document Delivery

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Recommended Citation

Desmarais, Norman and Luther, Judy (1994) "Innovations Affecting Us / Document Delivery," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 6: Iss. 5, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1794>

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Innovations Affecting Us

Document Delivery

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Document Delivery

by **Norman Desmarais**

The information explosion has long ago made it difficult for libraries to cope with limited acquisitions budgets. Online and CD-ROM technologies have only exacerbated the problems, making patrons more aware of publications and the inadequacies of libraries to provide them on request. Now, the same technologies that magnified the problems are being used to provide solutions. This month, we look at what three companies are doing to facilitate document delivery for researchers and librarians.

InfoTrac Articles

Information Access Company has been working with **Data Research** and several other OPAC vendors to facilitate a connection to its **Information Access Center**. Initially, the company provides the option of accessing several Information Access Company databases stored remotely at the Information Access Center. The index and abstract databases include the full text of articles in both ASCII and image formats to provide push-button access to cited articles from nearly 1000 general reference, academic, and business journals.

Using any OPAC workstation or remote terminal or PC linked to Information Access Company's Central 2000 service via LAN or WAN, the patron can: •view the bibliographic citation, abstract, and full text of articles in the course of a periodical search; •mark desired articles and enter a simple command to order the article; •receive a confirmation code from the system and proceed to the library's InfoTrac Articles print station to enter that code and receive copies of the selected articles.

InfoTrac Articles automatically selects the optimum format for article delivery — either enhanced ASCII or full page image. For those articles which consist simply of columns of text, enhanced ASCII will be delivered, without advertisements or irrelevant articles cluttering the page. This format is typically faster and less costly.

For articles which include photographs, charts, or other graphic elements key to the article contents, the patron will automatically receive the full page image. Patrons can view the full text of articles on-screen before ordering, thereby making the document order more precise and less wasteful of paper and printer supplies. A debit card system at the print station allows for cost recovery. Instant article delivery eliminates patrons waiting, and possibly forgetting, to claim ordered documents.

UMI Advanced Document Delivery System

UMI demonstrated its **Advanced Document Delivery System (ADDS)** at the **American Library Association** conference in Miami. It showed how researchers and information professionals can access all of UMI's electronic holdings — including abstract and index databases, ASCII full-text, and full-images —

from a central information management system at UMI headquarters in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Available in the first quarter of 1995, the system will let researchers dial-in to UMI and view article images on-screen before deciding to print or fax it.

The UMI system will enable libraries to build local collections of high-use information in the formats they prefer — CD-ROM, online, magnetic tape, or microform — while maintaining the means to gain instant access to other information from the information system in Ann Arbor, Michigan. More timely updates than CD-ROM databases permit will give users better access to more recent data. The system will let researchers call up complete article images on-screen and "page through" articles to determine whether to request a printed copy.

This system has a "universal searching" function that does not confine a customer to searching only content from a specific database such as **UMI's Newspaper Abstracts** or **ABI/INFORM**, for example. The file structure enables researchers to search every title that's available in electronic format, including periodicals, newspapers, and dissertations. ADDS will offer libraries a cost-effective way to serve both patrons seeking popular information sources and researchers who need access to infrequently used material.

UMI demonstrated two configurations for its document delivery system. The first runs in a Windows environment and features an electronic "Table of Contents" of information titles at UMI. Users select from a list of articles they want displayed, printed, or faxed. The software allows other searches to take place while the article files are being delivered.

The second configuration features the standard UMI Searchware interface. This system allows users to search one of the UMI abstract and index databases stored locally on a CD-ROM drive, much as they do today. As the user scrolls through the list of retrieved citations, the system identifies articles available for image or ASCII document delivery. The user can then request the article image from the UMI system in Ann Arbor and view it at the local terminal before making a decision to print it or have it sent to a fax machine.

The **UMI Advanced Document Delivery System** will offer access to all of the company's electronic holdings in the areas of business, general reference, science & technology, and social sciences from approximately 1986 forward. The company will also create gateways for OPAC vendors to access the UMI system automatically from their interfaces. The system will contain all copyright-cleared material and will track outgoing article printouts for publisher reporting.

The Electronic Reference Library

The **Electronic Reference Library (ERL)** is **SilverPlatter's** solution for providing Wide Area Network (WAN) access to all major databases via the TCP/IP protocol. It uses an open systems design to offer librarians the ability to create an electronic library by collecting, organizing, and distributing increasing amounts of electronic information across institutional or cross-consortium networks.

Based on client/server architecture, ERL has two software components: the ERL clients (retrieval interface) and the ERL servers (search engine). ERL compliant databases are mounted on one or more UNIX servers and are searched on the user's choice of platform: DOS, Windows, or Macintosh. By using client/server architecture, ERL offers users the ability to choose their preferred retrieval interface to access any ERL compliant product, regardless of the server platform.

ERL is designed around **SilverPlatter's Data eXchange Protocol (DXP)**, which standardizes the communication between the ERL clients and servers. DXP specifies retrieval functionality, including Boolean searching, Thesauri, Hot Links, and multi-database searching, guaranteeing that ERL retrieval clients maintain the search functionality of their stand-alone counterparts.

SilverPlatter has developed programs to make ERL technology available for software and OPAC vendors who want to either write ERL compliant retrieval clients, or develop gateways from their Z39.50 clients to ERL compliant databases. Tape lease providers and other information providers may choose to distribute their databases in ERL compliant form. Through these programs, ERL offers a new channel for distributing information products to users worldwide with increased functionality and data security. With this approach SilverPlatter hopes to foster the cooperative development of retrieval software and database products throughout the electronic publishing industry.

SilverPlatter designed ERL as a database networking solution for libraries, so it can be managed by a librarian, from his or her workstation, without requiring systems expertise. Librarians

can manage user accounts, database administration, security, and usage statistics through a front end program called ERLADMIN. The advanced level of statistics, which ERL maintains, makes it possible to understand and serve the needs of differing user groups across institutional or cross-consortium networks.

With over 200 ERL compliant databases already available, ERL enables the organization of collections of electronic information for groups of users with different information needs. A single Electronic Reference Library supports multiple collections of media independent electronic information, providing access only to appropriate, authorized users.

The first release of ERL supports a **SCO UNIX Server** on an Intel platform with **SilverPlatter PC-SPIRS, WinSPIRS, and MacSPIRS** retrieval clients. Future releases of ERL will offer a **Sun Solaris** server and a UNIX Character client. Other client and server platforms will follow.

SilverPlatter has installed ERL at locations in the United States and in Europe. Interested institutions can obtain ERL beta software on a controlled release basis by contacting SilverPlatter Information or their local distributor. ERL software is available at no additional charge to SilverPlatter subscribers. ☛

Information providers are all scrambling to provide researchers and librarians with better, more timely document delivery. The strong competition among them works to our benefit and that of our patrons. — ND

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