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Innovations Affecting Us

Hot Wired — News Services to the Desktop

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INTRODUCTION

Recent library and online conferences have included a growing number of exhibitors who offer news services electronically delivered via the Web directly to the computer screen. Desktop news services are evolving and expanding rapidly from the corporate environment to the consumer market.

Although the academic library may not be involved in the decision to acquire a desktop news service for university administrators, acquisitions librarians will want to be conversant with industry trends, the major players and the evolution of these services. It looks like the next step in the progression from ownership (housed locally), to access (just-in-time acquisition), is delivery of specific information to end users displayed unbidden on their screen.

New entrants, such as **PointCast** and **NewsCast**, function as distributors and they broadcast information acquired from aggregators and content providers. Aggregators, who are established in the corporate market, such as **NewsNet**, **Datetimes**, **Profound** and **NewsEDGE**, profile business and financial information which they deliver through corporate email platforms or more recently, Web based services. **Lexis-Nexis** and **Dialog**, as traditional databases, have offered alerting services for many years.

Content providers, such as **Reuters** and **Dow Jones**, supply information directly to corporate clients, Web publishers, aggregators and distributors. The explosion of access to the Web offers new opportunities and provides the incentive for "coopetition" where companies who compete in some areas will cooperate in others, i.e.: **Reuters** delivers their own news alert service while making their database available through aggregators.

This article offers an overview of the changes taking place and a synopsis of the key players who have been delivering customized business information services to corporations as well as the broadcast providers who are distributing news.

POINTCAST in CA

PointCast is the first Internet broadcast network that delivers up-to-the minute news and information free to anyone with access to the Internet. PointCast is pioneering Smart Screen technology which automatically begins running the PointCast Network when a viewer's computer is idle, turning their computer screen into a dynamic source of information.

The end user selects news from content providers who serve as either sources or aggregators of information. An Internet broadcaster rather than a Web-based company, PointCast serves as a distribution channel, partners with information providers and offers customized data which is available free as it is supported by advertising.

Content for PointCast includes national and international news,

stock information, industry updates, weather from around the globe, sports scores, etc. from sources like *Time*, *People* and *Money Magazine*, **Reuters**, **PR Newswire**, **BusinessWire**, **Sportsticker**, **Accuweather** and **CNN**. Some local newspapers are included, such as the *LA Times*, *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *San Jose Mercury News*.

There are three products which PointCast provides: 1) world public news broadcast over the Internet via the PointCast network free to users; 2) an I-Server to corporations which saves on network traffic and delivers internal company news over private intranets; and 3) specific vertical industry news broadcast via business-to-business extranets with Community Cast Networks.

Targeting CEOs and executive level decision makers, PointCast's pitch is — "Don't wait 'til tomorrow morning to find out what happened today. Don't let your office be a cave." Since being introduced last year, PointCast exploded on the scene with a million users signed in the first nine months for

their service. Individuals are asked for demographic information (such as age, gender, zip code) useful to advertisers rather than their name and address for reasons of privacy.

With the rapid growth of multiple subscribers within a company, it is more efficient to have a local onsite server to reduce network traffic. The PointCast I-Server is offered for a one time fee of \$999 and allows companies to incorporate their own news: HR updates, news releases, competitive initiatives, company policies and product announcements. Electronic distribution of this data can reduce printing and production costs while presenting information so **WavePhone** that it will be seen and read. Employees can click on a headline, activating a channel viewer and view the full story or hotlink to a URL

from the fulltext of an article.

Corporations have the option of providing access to industry specific news that is selected and broadcast as part of Community Cast Networks for professionals in vertical industries, such as health, government, real estate, education. The concept of an "extranet" represents news of interest to people across a profession and complements the world news and company information being distributed.

PointCast Incorporated was founded in 1992 to provide current news and information services to viewers and corporations via the Internet and corporate intranets. The Company's flagship product, the PointCast Network, can be downloaded for free at <<http://www.pointcast.com>>. The Company has received more than \$48 million to date in funding from venture capital firms, strategic media and technology companies. Top management at PointCast is comprised of former executives from **Adobe**, **Oracle**, **Lotus** and **Ziff-Davis Publishing**. PointCast can be found on the Web at <<http://www.pointcast.com>> or call them at 408-253-0894 with questions. They are located in Cupertino CA and have 170 employees.

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Coopetition: cooperative competition

NEWSCAST in AZ

Introduced by **WavePhore** in 1993, **Newscast** offers newsfeeds distributed to corporate information via email, groupware such as Lotus Notes or Exchange and via the company Intranet. Users can access Newscast via their Web servers and set up personal profiles with the results delivered via email.

Newscast offers timely competitive information such as earnings reports at the same time as they are available to Wall Street and at lower cost, since WavePhore owns the broadcast network. Content includes the **Associated Press**, **DowVision**, **Knight-Ridder Tribune Business News**, **Comtex**, **Ziff-Davis Wire**, and more than 600 sources. Companies pay for each channel based on the approximate number of users.

As a broadcast network provider, **WavePhore** is a vendor partner with **PointCast**, supplying the channels they offer. In addition to supporting their own **NewsCast** product, **WavePhore** provides broadcast data to **Desk Top Data** for their **NewsEDGE** product. Further examples of cooptation.

In 1990 in **WavePhore** bought **Mainstream Data** which had pioneered the broadcast of data ten years ago and is the leading operator of data broadcast networks and equipment in North America and the leader in wireless transmission of real-time news and information. Located in Phoenix AZ, **Newscast** employs 50 of the 150 staff at **WavePhore** and can be found on the Web at <<http://www.newscast.com>> or contacted at 602-952-5500.

NEWSNET in PA

Customizing business information for corporations, **NewsNet** alerts users to coming trends before they appear in the popular press by providing access to in-depth business periodicals. **NewsNet** has offered a searchable business database for more than 15 years to corporations and they are particularly strong in the electronics and computer industry, and in the fields of energy, the environment, financial, international, publishing, health care management, broadcasting and telecommunications.

Known for the timeliness of its information sources, **NewsNet** covers more than 40 industry areas and offers access to the fulltext of more than 1000 newsletters, newswires, magazines and specialized business publications such as *American Banker*, *Bond Buyer*, *Defense Daily*, *Education Daily*, the *Financial Times*, *Health News Daily*, *Newsbytes*, as well as business references such as *Dun & Bradstreet*, *Standard & Poor's* and *TRW Business Profiles*.

Subscribers can perform retrospective searches or create a current awareness profile, via **NewsNet's** Windows-based interface called **Baton** or via their new Web interface. **NewsFlash**, their personalized clipping agent, is recognized as flexible and robust for ease of retrieval. It matches a customized profile against more than 22,000 articles entered into the database each day. When a user signs on, they are notified of the name of the folder and the number of new articles available so they can scan the headlines and decide whether to review the results in full, kwic (keyword-in-context) or in a preview format.

Beginning in 1997, **NewsNet Smart-mail** delivers the results of searches via an interactive email, which enables the user to hotlink from the headlines to the fulltext. This interactive email feature offers the convenience of retrieving complete articles without exiting the email system.

Subscriptions to **NewsNet** on the Web begin at \$19.95/month or a full year for \$219.45. There is a special rate for colleges and universities which offers unlimited access from the library for business school and library school students and faculty.

NewsNet was founded in 1981 by **William L. McLean III** (who had owned a Philadelphia newspaper) and **John Bushmer**. **NewsNet** is located in Bryn Mawr, PA and can be found on the

Web at <<http://www.newsnet.com>>. To inquire about their service call 800-952-0122 in the US and or Canada 610-527-8030.

NEWSEGE from Desktop Data in MA

NewsEDGE products integrate real time newswire, newspaper, newsletter and magazine stories directly with customer networks. Profiles which are defined by each user, monitor the fulltext of a story from more than 560 news sources. The database is searchable by fulltext, by subject, by ticker symbol or with artificial intelligence techniques.

NewsEDGE/WEB provides customized news profiling and searching via standard Web browsers over company Intranets. Personal and group views can be completely customized and are not limited to pre-defined categories. **LinkEDGE** enables hypertext links from external news stories and internal news wires to Intranet or Internet content such as SEC Edgar filings from **Disclosure, Inc.** and **Indepth Data**.

More than 600 content providers are included, such as the **Associated Press**, **Disclosure**, **Dow Jones**, *Financial Times*, *First Call*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, **Knight-Ridder**, **New York Times** news service, **Nikkei**, **Reuters**, the *Wall Street Journal* and others.

Founded in 1988 by **Don McLagan**, **Desktop Data's** mission is to provide news useful to busy people at work throughout an enterprise. In 1992, they offered a server-to-server capability for providing filtered, integrated news sources into customized **Lotus Notes** applications and email. Located in Waltham MA, they employ 158 people and can be found on the Web at <<http://www.desktopdata.com>> or via phone at 800-255-3343.

DATATIMES in OK

DataTimes offers business and financial information to corporate libraries. Last year **DataTimes** was acquired by **UMI**, which offers a broad content base of newspapers, newswires, business journals, broadcast transcripts, and dissertations available online through **ProQuest Direct**, **EyeQ** and **DataTimes Online**.

EyeQ and **DataTimes Online** provide access to more than 5200 business news and information sources totaling more than 55 million documents. The database contains extensive local, regional, national and international newspapers, newswire reports, business articles, broadcast transcripts, financial and company reports, financial market reports, and investment results.

EyeQ functions as an electronic clipping service and delivers news alerting and stock price graphing via email. Users can choose to have the fulltext or headlines of clipped articles and reports delivered to their email soon after it has been added to the **DataTimes EyeQ Network**. **EyeQ** can be configured to be simultaneously accessed on a company's local area network (LAN).

Over the years, **DataTimes** grew by providing archival library services to newspapers and business information services to corporate libraries. **UMI** acquired **DataTimes** for its content, distribution channels and technology complement to the **ProQuest Direct** online service.

ProQuest Direct recently received the **Information Industry Association's (IIA)** "Hot Shots" award as "The Best Professional Online Product" for 1996 while **EyeQ** received an **IIA** award the previous year as a leading online product. In 1997, **UMI** will combine "the best of both worlds" for **ProQuest Direct** and **EyeQ** to give both **DataTimes** and **UMI** customers the ability to access combined content from both services with a single product. However, customers will be able to choose between two different interfaces: a powerful one for the professional researcher or a more basic interface built for the knowledge worker.

Product information about **DataTimes**, which is located in Oklahoma City, OK is available via the Web at <<http://www.datatimes.com>> or by phone at 800-642-2525. Additional information about **UMI** is available at <<http://www.umi.com>>.

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PROFOUND in NC

Introduced in 1995, **Profound** is the Web-based software which provides access to over 20 newswires (such as the **Associated Press**, **Knight-Ridder**, **Kyodo News**), 4,000 newspapers, magazines and trade journals and more than 40,000 market reports (such as those from **Frost & Sullivan**). **Profound** permits searching multiple databases simultaneously and provides access to portions of market reports which can be viewed with **Adobe Acrobat™**. The user can search the table of contents of the market research report and pay only for the applicable sections.

The proprietary **Infosort™** search system provides accurate search results by enabling staff to qualify terms, i.e.: **Sprint** as a telecommunications company rather than sprint as a race to run.

Profound™ Livewire is the alerting service which enables users to establish a profile specific to an individual company, sector or topic. Alerts appear as a flashing icon on the screen and can be posted to as many people within an organization as necessary without additional charge.

Profound is owned by M.A.I.D. (**Market Analysis and Information Database**) which was founded by **Dan Wagner** in 1985 to provide better access to information needed in the corporate market. The U.S. Headquarters recently relocated from NYC to Cary, NC. **Profound** can be found on the Web at <<http://www.profound.com>> or contacted by phone at 888-809-6193.

DIALOG from Knight Ridder Information, Inc. in CA

Dialog, the first commercial online service, has offered an alerting capability for many years which delivers search results via local email. From the citation, customers can request the full document delivered via email, fax, FTP, first class mail or overnight.

Today **KRI** offers over 450 databases on **Dialog** and another 200 different databases on **DataStar**. The content is clustered into 12 industries: news and media, business and finance, intellectual property, government and regulation, technology, energy and the environment, medicine, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, food and agriculture, social sciences, and reference. These can be searched by database or by 100 subject categories such as business statistics, newswires (such as **AP**, **Reuters**, **PR Newswire**, **Federal News Service**).

Business Base, introduced in 1995, focuses on providing business professionals a Windows-based search capability that does not require knowledge of formal search strategies. Information can be searched in four categories: the company, market, product or topic. The update feature automatically executes searches and presents the results when the user signs on. Reports selected can be mailed or faxed.

DialogWeb is being introduced this spring and offers a Web-based interface to classic **Dialog** and will deliver the search results directly to the customer's email.

In its 25th year of operation, **Dialog** was founded by **Roger Summit** in 1972 as the first commercial online service as part of the **Lockheed Missiles and Space Company**. **KnightRidder** acquired **Dialog** in 1988, and the European online service, **DataStar** in 1993, followed by **Article Express International** for document delivery. **CARL UnCover**, the first table of contents service, was added in 1993 and also offers an alerting service.

KRI is located in Mountain View, CA, and can be found on the Web at <<http://www.kriinfo.com>> or reached by phone at 800-334-2564.

LEXIS-NEXIS in OH

NEXIS began in 1979 and offers workers over 7100 sources of news and business information such as *The New York Times*,

The Washington Post, *Fortune* and *Business Week*. Over 100,000 articles are added each day from worldwide newspapers, magazines, news wires and trade journals.

As a searchable database, **LEXIS-NEXIS** offers customers various levels of searching from Boolean to natural language based on their expertise. Searches are designed to meet a variety of information needs such as: company financial information, industry news, marketing information, people or products in the news.

AnswerPak is a Web-based interface focused on specific professions and designed to guide marketers, journalists, financial analysts and sales professionals through the search, source selection and document delivery options. Designed as a search service for the archival database, it also serves as an electronic clipping service where searches are repeated daily, weekly or monthly as specified by the customer.

Three other services focus on delivering current information via email. **Publication TRACKER** serves as a table-of-contents alerting service. **LEXIS-NEXIS Tracker** offers customized searches of news and business information. **InfoTailor** offers profiles which are controlled by the end user and can be modified as needed with the results delivered via email.

LEXIS-NEXIS began as the **Data Corporation** in 1966 and was bought by **The Mead Corporation** in 1968. Today they are owned by **Reed-Elsevier, Inc.** and employ 4500 staff. You can find **LEXIS-NEXIS** on the Web at <<http://www.lexis-nexis.com>> or reach them by phone at 800-227-4908.

SUMMARY

There are several trends that are emerging with the growth of Web-based services and the creative application of technology.

The sale of news services by aggregators and content providers to corporations has evolved from 1) searching databases online to 2) having searches executed automatically and then delivered by internal email (such as to 3) providing delivery over the Web. These database providers are making business intelligence available to their users through new distribution methods.

PointCast has introduced a revolutionary concept by converting the real estate occupied by a screen saver to a source of useful information — from flying toasters to headline news. Companies are adopting this technology to deliver industry specific news combined with their own company announcements to their staff.

This "push" approach to delivering information is funded by advertisers who can use this medium to learn how many people actually click on their ad and look at their Web site — feedback not available from print or TV ads. A free news service is attractive to many consumers and businesses who are OK with advertising and flashing headlines on their screens. Some users find the approach distracting and prefer a more relaxing use of their screen space and time.

Internet service providers are beginning to offer customized Web pages that display information (news, sports, weather, stock reports) selected by the user when they sign on. The February 24th issues of *Business Week* has a special report on Webcasting which summarizes the players, including **AOL**, **Microsoft**, **Netscape** and their planned introductions later this year.

Academic institutions will be able to select services designed for professionals in vertical markets (such as education, business, health) for their administrators, faculty and staff. These will be available from content providers such as **Reuters**, aggregators such as **NewsNet**, Webcasters such as **PointCast** and software vendors such as **SilverPlatter** who offer multiple databases under one interface. Decisions about the delivery of customized information over the Web via emails or directly to screens will be made by someone at the university and librarians may want to help evaluate the options. 🌿