



Working with the RDN to help build the DNER

by Peter Burnhill, Director of EDINA

The Resource Discovery Network (RDN) is a network of subject-based gateways that will provide students, lecturers and researchers with access to a full range of Internet, bibliographic, documentary and data resources.

Funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the RDN is organised into five independent 'faculty' hubs, covering Engineering, Mathematics and Computing; the Life Sciences and Medicine; the Humanities; the Physical Sciences; and the Social Sciences, Business and Law. (A hub for the Creative Arts and Industries will be added later.) Some of these are based on former subject-based gateways: EMC (formerly EEVL), SOSIG and BIOME (formerly OMNI). The RDN hubs are based at various universities around the UK:

- EMC (Engineering, Mathematics and Computers), led by Heriot-Watt University
- BIOME (Life Sciences and Medicine), led by the University of Nottingham
- Humbul (Humanities), led by the University of Oxford
- PSIGate (Physical Sciences), led by CALIM, the Consortium of Academic Libraries In Manchester
- SOSIG (Social Sciences, Business and Law), led by the University of Bristol.

The RDN is managed by the RDN Centre, based at King's College London and the University of Bath. More about

the RDN is found at <http://www.rdn.ac.uk/>.

In many respects the RDN aims to provide subject-based entry-points to the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER). As a JISC national datacentre, EDINA is part of the DNER, and the subject-based Internet resources that EDINA provides are also DNER 'discovery' facilities. To be specific, the specialist Abstract & Indexing (A&I) databases – such as Art Abstracts, BIOSIS Previews, Ei Compendex and INSPEC – enable students and staff to discover the existence of the key citations they require for their learning, teaching and research.

The challenge is to ensure that users have a coherent view of what is on offer in the DNER. Fortunately, much is already in place to help. EDINA deploys a 'faculty group' presentation of its services (<http://edina.ac.uk/services/>) that uses similar subject groupings as the RDN 'faculty hubs'. EDINA has also been working with the former subject-based gateways (ADAM, EEVL, SOSIG and OMNI) for promotional purposes, and exploring aspects of interoperability with EEVL. Similarly, the RDN Centre is currently developing a facility to search for resources across several hubs at the same time.

Both EDINA and the RDN wish to develop links across the DNER using Z39.50 interoperability. This includes 'broad-but-shallow' cross-searching across Internet resources. Accordingly, the RDN Centre has given full support

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to a proposal by EDINA, submitted in response to the JISC Circular 5/99 (inviting proposals for the development of the DNER), to put this into action by providing both a Z39.50 broker for the RDN subject portals and a cross-search A&I Portal for the A&I databases hosted by the JISC-funded datacentres with Z39.50 targets.

EDINA welcomes the arrival of the RDN and, as a JISC national datacentre, we aim to work with the RDN hubs and gateways to make the DNER a reality.

Rob McCron (1963 -2000)

Sadly, we have lost a good friend and close colleague here at the University of Edinburgh. This note to mark his passing is a small token of our respect.

Rob McCron was the manager of the University's central UNIX computer services. He died suddenly and unexpectedly, at the beginning of the year.

The high reliability of EDINA services is in no small part due to the keen sense of responsibility shown by Rob and his colleagues in the UNIX team.

Web Access to EDINA BIOSIS Now Available

by John Murison, EDINA

EDINA BIOSIS-Web version 1.0 was launched on 14th February, and is available to all institutions subscribing to EDINA BIOSIS. It can be invoked from the EDINA home page (<http://edina.ac.uk>). The EDINA BIOSIS-Telnet interface continues to be available.

Subscribing institutions have received sample quantities of an eight-page, A5-size Reference Guide to EDINA BIOSIS-Web. Please contact EDINA (edina@ed.ac.uk) if you wish to order larger quantities (£23 per 100 Guides).

A series of BIOSIS-Web training

courses is in preparation; these are due to take place in April. (See Forthcoming Events on the back page.)

Many thanks to our field testers. They have helped us to provide an easy user interface plus facilities for advanced searching of this sophisticated database.

(There are currently no facilities to save searches between sessions.)

Features of the EDINA BIOSIS-Web interface:

- The BIOSIS new format data are accessible from this interface; the date range is from 1993-present, and

the database is updated weekly. The old format data, covering the range 1985-1998, continue to be accessible from EDINA BIOSIS-Telnet.

- Context-sensitive online documentation is provided.
- Like other EDINA Web services, EDINA BIOSIS-Web is accessible via ATHENS shared access accounts, as well as via ATHENS personal accounts.
- Facilities to use the BIOSIS authority file are provided in EDINA BIOSIS-Web.

Biosis-Web Authority File page

The screenshot shows the EDINA BIOSIS Authority File Tree Display interface. At the top is a navigation menu with links for Standard Search, Advanced Search, Indexes, Authority File, Marked Records, Search History, Help, and Exit. The main content area is titled "Authority File Tree Display" and includes a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "any (or)" and a "search" button. Below the search bar are three buttons: "scope note", "list of terms", and "term finder". A callout points to the search bar saying "Apply Boolean operators to searches". Another callout points to the "search" button saying "Search for any checked items". A callout points to the "term finder" button saying "New Authority File search". Below the buttons is a section for selecting terms, with a callout saying "Returns to original list of found terms". Under "Main Term", there is a checkbox for "Parasitology". Under "Broader Terms", there is a checkbox for "Major Concept Terms [Expand]". Under "Narrower Terms", it says "No Narrower Terms.". Under "Related Terms", there are checkboxes for "Ecology [Expand]", "Infection [Expand]", "Pest Assessment Control and Management [Expand]", and "Vector Biology [Expand]". Callouts explain that the "Major Concept Terms" checkbox "Makes this term the main term" and that the "Ecology" checkbox "Makes this term the main term". At the bottom, there is a "Scope Note for Parasitology" section with a callout saying "Extra information about main term".

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Promoting Use of Numeric Datasets in Learning and Teaching

by Robin Rice, *Edinburgh University Data Library*

The Edinburgh University Data Library (home of EDINA), the British Library of Political and Economic Science at the LSE, The Data Archive and MIMAS have joined forces in a JISC-funded project to enhance local support of numeric dataset analysis.

UK Higher Education is rich in numeric datasets. In the socio-economic field, for example, there are large-scale government surveys, current and historical population censuses, international studies, academic surveys, economic time series, and geographic data. These numeric data are disseminated in ways that support the work of many academic researchers, including some postgraduate students.

However, these resources are under-used in the learning and teaching environment. Despite the potential gain in numeracy, critical thinking, and knowledge of society by students conducting data analysis at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels, the integration of numeric data resources into coursework is frequently frustrated. As expectations about use of information technology in learning and teaching rise, the barriers which inhibit the use of this wealth of data in the classroom and in student projects need to be lowered.

Agreements for Palmer's and PCI to End

by Margarete Tubby, *EDINA*

The current five-year agreements for Chadwyck-Healey's Palmer's Index to *The Times* and Periodicals Contents Index (PCI) expire at the end of March. JISC and EDINA are keen to ensure continuity of the existing services until the end of the academic year, by securing an extension to the current access rights.

Negotiations between JISC and Chadwyck-Healey about an agreement for a PCI full-text service are under way.

Current subscribers to Palmer's Index have a perpetual licence to this database. All sites were issued with a CD-ROM when they subscribed, which is theirs to

Making effective use of numeric data requires greater skill, more preparation, and more time than printed materials or bibliographic databases; and students and teachers require a high level of support. While some problems can be solved by data providers or by a national approach to support for learning and teaching, others need to be tackled at the local level.

This project will generate knowledge about good practice, and pitfalls faced by those who support teachers and learners using national data resources.

The objectives of the project are:

- To establish a short-life Task Force on Using Data in Teaching and Learning, made up of local data service representatives and users of data services
- To investigate the existing use of numeric data in learning and teaching through a national sample survey and case studies
- To investigate the existing forms of local data service support
- To carry out national studies to achieve these objectives and report back to JISC.

If you would like to participate in the project or learn more about it, please send an email to Robin.Rice@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 651 1431.

keep in any event. The future of an online service depends on whether or not those subscribers regard their own CD-based services as sufficient. We estimate that EDINA would be able to offer continued online access to a Palmer's service (with a web interface from September 2000) on a cost recovery basis of £200 per site, providing all current subscribers take part. Please make your views known to JISC and EDINA by the end of March.

You can check progress on <http://edina.ac.uk/pci/>, and <http://edina.ac.uk/palmers/>.

Art Index Retrospective

by John Murison, *EDINA*

CHEST has reached agreement with HW Wilson concerning the provision of online access to Art Index Retrospective to the tertiary education community. This dataset provides a searchable index of 55 years of art journalism (1929-1984) from 420 noted publications round the globe.

EDINA already provides an online Art Abstracts service, and has been asked by JISC to complement that service with Art Index Retrospective. Together, Art Index Retrospective and Art Abstracts (1984 to present) finds citations to over seven decades of articles.

Points to note:

- The datasets require separate licences – institutions can have subscriptions for Art Abstracts or Art Index Retrospective or both.
- The total cost to an institution for three years' online access to Art Index Retrospective will be £6,600 + VAT, which can be paid as one lump sum or as annual payments. This will give unlimited access within the institution to the EDINA service, and will confer rights to use of the data in perpetuity.
- Access to Art Index Retrospective will be provided from the existing EDINA Art Abstracts interface. The data coverage available to users will depend on which subscriptions their institutions have taken out.
- CHEST are offering, on request, to provide a CD-ROM of the data in addition to the EDINA online service.
- EDINA aims to launch the service in time for Libtech 2000 (20-22 March), at Olympia, London.

News in Brief

IASSIST Conference

The 26th Annual Conference of the International Association for Social Science Information Service & Technology (IASSIST) will be held at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in June 2000. The conference title – *Data in the Digital Library: Charting the Future of Social, Spatial and Government Data* – emphasises the strengthening relationships between archives and libraries in managing, preserving and providing access to digital collections.

IASSIST is an international organisation of individuals from around the world who are engaged in the acquisition, processing, maintenance and distribution of machine-readable text and/or numeric social science data for research and instruction. There is active involvement from UK data services in the conference programme. Peter Burnhill, Director of EDINA, is currently IASSIST President.

For more information on IASSIST and the conference, see <http://datalib.library.ualberta.ca/iassist/>

UKBORDERS

Data

UKBORDERS expects soon to receive its second contribution from the Queen Mary and Westfield Project. This data will provide a link of Census reporting units from 1840 to the present. A lookup between 1991 Enumeration Districts and new Primary Care Groups (PCGs – the boundary of a collection of patients that attend a group of GPs) now exists (available from the ONS), and it is hoped that these boundaries can be created and added to the UKBORDERS system in the first quarter of 2000.

Access

The latest UKBORDERS usage statistics indicate our largest monthly number of accesses (877) in November 1999 (<http://edina.ed.ac.uk/ukborders/webstats.html>).

Edinburgh Data & Information Access

<http://edina.ac.uk>

EDINA, based at Edinburgh University Data Library, is a JISC-funded national datacentre. It offers the UK tertiary education and research community networked access to a library of data, information and research resources. All EDINA services are free of charge at the point of use. For information on institutional subscription fees, visit the EDINA web site, or contact us by email (details below).

EDINA services are:

- AGDEX
- Art Abstracts
- BIOSIS
- CAB Abstracts
- Digimap
- Ei Compendex®
- ESPMD
- INSPEC
- Palmer's Index to The Times
- Periodical Contents Index
- SALSER
- UKBORDERS

EDINA contacts

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 Peter Burnhill (Director of EDINA)
 Tel: 0131 650 3302 Fax: 0131 650 3308
 Email: edina@ed.ac.uk URL: <http://edina.ac.uk>

Courses

Recent courses taught by Alistair Towers of EDINA and Justin Hayes of MIMAS proved highly successful, and more are planned for later this year. The courses covered accessing census and other boundary data, and producing useful research information. Visualisation and cartographic techniques that facilitate advanced data investigation are also included.

For further information and dates on the spring courses, see <http://www.mimas.ac.uk/courses/cal00a.html>

Forthcoming Events

Libtech 2000, 20-22 March at Olympia 2, London

EDINA will be at stand no. 110 for this exhibition. For further information, see <http://www.libtech-international.com>.

BIOSIS-Web Training Sessions:

Tuesday, 11 April, University of Manchester
 Wednesday, 12 April, University of Edinburgh
 Thursday, 13 April, Cardiff University
 Friday, 14 April, King's College London

New Digimap Training Dates

University of Manchester, Manchester Computing

Module One: Tuesday 13 June 2000
 Module Two: Wednesday 14 June 2000
 Module Three: Tuesday 27 June 2000
 Module Four: Wednesday 28 June 2000

University of Portsmouth, Faculty of the Environment Learning Resource Centre

Module One: Tuesday 4 July 2000
 Module Two: Wednesday 5 July 2000
 Module Three: Thursday 13 July 2000
 Module Four: Friday 14 July 2000

Please contact edina-training@ed.ac.uk for more information and to book a place on any of the above BIOSIS or Digimap courses.

EDINA subscription and registration

Most EDINA services require the completion of a licence agreement before those services can be made available to users. Free 30-day trials are available for most of these services. Please see the EDINA web site for details of the requirements of individual services.

For UKBORDERS, there is no fee for academic institutions within the UK, but a licence agreement must be signed (email edina@ed.ac.uk), and individual users must sign an End User Licence.

SALSER is a completely free service, with no subscription fee. No licence or prior registration is required.

Newsline is published four times a year by the Edinburgh University Data Library. Suggestions and comments on *Newsline* may be sent to edina@ed.ac.uk.

The next issue of *Newsline* will appear in Summer 2000.

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