



Newsline

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EDINA & MIMAS learning to VLE

by Peter Burnhill, Director of EDINA, and Moira Massey, L&T Projects Coordinator

EDINA and MIMAS are to make available over 300 hours of specially-commissioned online learning materials, designed for use in 'virtual learning environments' (VLEs) at further education colleges. This activity forms part of the National Learning Network (NLN -<http://www.nln.ac.uk>), part of a collaborative action by British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTa - <http://www.becta.org.uk>), the JISC (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk>) and other key agencies in the learning and skills field.

Online learning objects

BECTa commissioned the materials from a range of commercial and academic suppliers. Referred to as 'learning objects', these Web-based learning materials were developed as short 'chunks of learning', rather than as full courses. In all there are about 1200 learning objects. These are used to assist delivery of topic content, practice or assessment activities, and designed so that it can be adapted for different purposes, for inclusion within existing curricula.

The initial offerings cover a wide variety of subject areas to meet the needs of students attending the different course levels offered within further education. (Level 3 is equivalent to Advanced GNVQ and GCE A Level.) Examples include:

- Amenity Horticulture, Level 2
- Application of Number, Levels 1,2,3
- Art and Design, Levels 1,2
- Business Studies, Levels 1,2
- Communications, Levels 1,2,3

- Generic Science, Level 1
- Health Studies, Levels 1,2,3
- Hospitality and Catering, Levels 1,2
- Key Skills: Communications, Levels 1,2,3
- Mathematics, Level 2

A full list may be found at: <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/features/elearning/subjects/Totallist.doc>

The project

The scoping and technical appraisal study for what will be a two-year project is already under way, and is due to report in February 2002. This is the first major venture by the JISC National Data Centres into service provision for such a wide range of students in colleges. MIMAS and EDINA are both giving this high priority, with the two directors, Julia Chruszcz and Peter Burnhill, attending meetings in November with the producers of the learning materials and with Granada Learning (<http://www.learnwise.net>). The latter are making a customized version of LearnWise available as a management tool for the repository of materials and as a limited-function VLE.

The project has the short-term goal of ensuring that colleges with VLEs can download materials for use during 2002 and that staff in colleges currently without VLEs can gain experience of using online learning objects within courses. The project will also give the national datacentres opportunity to gear up for the role as digital repositories for online learning material, for use in both further and higher education.

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The prototype materials are being tried out at a selected group of colleges. Examples of the prototype materials, together with more information about the learning resources is found at: <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/features/elearning/newsletter2.pdf>

Technical Note

Each learning object is interoperable: each producer seeks to comply with internationally-agreed specifications: metadata (IMS 1.1) and content packaging (IMS 1.0). This helps ensure that a given chunk of content can be used in the different VLEs. A useful web site here is <http://www.cetis.ac.uk> which also provides summary of the Shareable Courseware Object Reference Model (SCORM) v.1.2, the specification for learning objects in the NLN. NLN materials also provide facilities for assessment for which IMS Question & Test Interoperability (Q&TI) specification is recommended. (For more information on IMS, see <http://www.imsproject.org> and <http://www.cetis.ac.uk>)

Service News

BIOSIS News

Back Data now available

The BIOSIS backdata (1969–84) is now available from EDINA. Sites that have paid the additional data fee according to the CHEST addendum form (<http://www.chest.ac.uk/datasets/biosis/>) may have access to the back data at no additional service charge.

Data Format Change

EDINA has improved the service for all users. All data i.e. 1969/1985–2001 is now in the same electronic format. This means there is a standardised display format used throughout the database, thus altering the previous arrangement whereby 1985–92 was implemented in a different format. Please note that due to BIOSIS indexing conventions changing over time not all data fields/elements are available for all years.

CAB Abstracts: New Subscription Period - Same Price

Over the past three years CAB Abstracts, from CAB International has represented exceptional value for UK HE, with CABI offering a significant discount under a special agreement with EDINA and OVID. So at a time when prices for CABI data have gone up across customer groups and service providers, EDINA are delighted that CABI have agreed to hold the data fee for EDINA users at the present level until the end of this academic year.

This means that the current EDINA price (£4600 for 8 concurrent users; £2600 for 4 concurrent users) will be prorated to the seven months up to 31 July 2002. Thereafter CABI will have to raise their data fee by 10% in line with increases to other communities. This will still constitute a substantial discount compared to the commercial list price; in fact, in real terms this represents a greater discount (of 25%) than under the original agreement. At the same time the subscription year will change to be in line with the academic financial year, i.e. 1 August–31 July, making budgeting and planning user support easier for most sites.

We are confident that these arrangements will increase the popularity of this service even further.

CAB Abstracts covers the significant research and development literature in the fields of agriculture, forestry, aspects of human health, human nutrition, animal health and the management and conservation of natural resources. The popular EDINA service with the familiar Ovid interface provides access for higher and further education institutions throughout the UK and Ireland.

Digimap

New Digimap Carto Release

EDINA is pleased to announce the release of Digimap Carto version 1.0.14. This new product offers more advanced mapping functionality. You can:

- search for a location using National Grid Co-ordinates, by clicking on a Location Map, or by using a Place Name Gazetteer
- specify the exact scale to which you want to zoom in or out, making it easy to view the map extent you need
- set a 'home' map, so that Carto always starts up with a map of your preferred location
- store maps in the Map Chest, for later retrieval, in the same way that you would bookmark web sites
- control the features on your map, for example, show only water features, or turn off all roads and railways
- print maps out in A4, A3 and A0 paper sizes, to your local printer or plotter customise zoom and panning amounts

New Carto is available now from the Advanced Services option in Digimap.

Ordnance Survey Mapping Updates

Digimap's Land-Line[®] maps have now been updated with the latest Ordnance Survey Land-Line data. EDINA update Land-Line once a year to ensure it reflects changes in the real world, such as new buildings, roads and other features. Digimap now also contains the new Meridian2 and Strategi map products. Meridian2 is an enhanced version of the original Meridian product and contains three new layers: hydrology, woodlands and gridded heights. The latest Strategi product contains several new features, such as tourist symbols, updated administrative boundaries and extra test settlement names.

Any queries regarding subscriptions to Digimap or use of the service should be sent via email to [<edina@ed.ac.uk>](mailto:edina@ed.ac.uk)

Statistical Accounts of Scotland - Subscription Service with added features

In October 2001, EDINA released an additional subscription service for the Statistical Accounts of Scotland with extra features which offer a wider range of searching and text processing.

The Statistical Accounts of Scotland basic free service has already proved to be a valuable resource for historians and other researchers interested in this unique collection of historic data. This basic free service will remain accessible to all.

The new subscription service offers the following additional features:

- Approximate Searching of all the text contained in the Accounts. This feature is useful if spelling is unknown or unclear, or variations of a word exist.
- The 'Show Text' feature, allowing users to see the text behind the page graphics.
- Cutting and pasting text from the show text pages into other software packages.
- Page Finder Facility - the Accounts may be searched by page and volume number.

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Project News

ZBLSA: Locating Source Articles in the DNER

Why such a service?

Since the first directly searchable Abstract and Indexing Service, BIDS ISI, became available to the higher education community ten years ago, 'discovering' an article of interest has come a very long way indeed. Today's users expectations, and that usually means linkage to full text. Most providers try to satisfy this through proprietary solutions, depending either on complex relationships between A&I providers and full text suppliers, or upon integrated vertical links. Either way, such facilities are not comprehensive, leaving substantial gaps in full text provision and ignoring the 'appropriate copy' problem. Similarly, arrangements to link to local holdings, made between service providers and individual institutions, are still relatively cumbersome to maintain for either side. Z39.50 links are used here and there, and occasionally a library may have its own OpenURL resolver; but it will be some time yet before this will be the case on a large scale.

ZBLSA and JOIN-UP

A national location resolver is needed to bridge the gap - one that is freely available for use by UK further and higher education. Under the heading 'Joining-up the DNER', Newsline carried an article a year ago describing ZBLSA, a JISC 5/99 project to develop a Z39.50 broker that would help connect a reference discovered in a A&I database to the appropriate services giving access to the source article, in print or full text. (ZBLSA is one of four related projects, collectively referred to as JOIN-UP, for further details see <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/development/projects/projects_joinup.htm>)

Statistical Accounts - added features

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- Display search results within context: The context consists of three lines of surrounding text that allows the user to judge if the reference is useful to them.

The subscription service is presently available to staff and students in Scotland's universities from within their own institution. In the next phase, students, pupils and staff in Scotland's colleges and schools, and staff and members of Scotland's public libraries will also have access to the subscription service. Eventually, institutions and individuals outside Scotland will also be able to subscribe.

The Statistical Accounts of Scotland service provides online access to digitised versions of the first two Statistical Accounts of Scotland covering the 1790s and the 1830s, among the best contemporary reports of life during the agricultural and industrial revolutions in Europe.

For further information on the Statistical Accounts of Scotland subscription service, go to: <<http://edina.ac.uk/statacc/sub-service.html>>

The task in ZBLSA Phase I, which began at the start of 2001, was to scope the functionality required for such a broker, to identify the choice of technology and to define the relation that the location service would have with its client community (DNER Portals) and the providers of article services. Phase I has been a success, having successfully built a prototype of broker which supports both Z39.50 and the OpenURL linking technologies. Associated activity has also laid the foundations for engaging with 'targets' for the broker, such as full text service providers as well as OPACs containing 'local' serial holdings.

The technical model for this DNER location service is that of a lightweight broker, not getting involved in individual transactions between users and services (service providers), with the aim of keeping operational cost and effort at a minimum. In the first instance, the DNER portals we have had in mind are the RDN subject portals - indeed, the RDNC and UKOLN are Associate Partners, - and the A&I services hosted at the JISC National Data Centres. For example, a reference to a journal article found by searching INSPEC (at BIDS or EDINA) would be passed to ZBLSA, which in turn would provide the respective Data Centre Portal, and hence the user, with a list of available sources for that journal article, including the user's local library.

The business model for the location broker is strictly revenue-neutral, and hence may also be regarded as 'lightweight'. The enquiry mechanism, aimed at the target (e.g. full-text service provider, library, etc.), is based on extant rights, supported by the ZBLSA Rights Evaluation Scheme, which in turn relies on 'assertions' from both sides of the demand/supply chain. On the client-side, a profiling mechanism identifies the services each institution wishes to make known to its members: for example, the preferred source of electronic document access, local OPAC, etc.

Testing 2002, for launch in 2003

Phase II of ZBLSA will begin at the start of 2002, building upon and extending the work done in Phase I. The aim is to offer a fully-fledged and scalable location service for the UK HE and FE community during 2003. Work will now begin in earnest to allow the repertoire of targets relevant to the DNER to grow, to include the key suppliers (libraries as well as commercial suppliers), and to take best advantage of 'aggregators', be these for article services or, in the case of the intended national union catalogue of serials (SUNCAT), of traditional 'holdings'. We intend extensive field-testing by the community, so we are keen to recruit assistance via our Site Reps. We are particularly keen to include 'institutional portals' developed by libraries as ways for meeting the needs of the staff and students at their university or college. Contact with the Project Manager (S. Shaw) or Project Director (P. Burnhill) should be made via edina@ed.ac.uk, the EDINA HelpDesk.

Staff News

James Crone recently obtained his MSc in GIS from the University of Nottingham, which followed his undergraduate degree from Edinburgh. His initial responsibilities with the Geo-data team at EDINA involve working on the quality assurance of the data provided by UKBORDERS, and increasing the provision of metadata for the service.

John Hughes started on October 1st as a software engineer working on the server software for the eMapScholar project. John previously worked in digital hardware design (embedded microprocessor applications). John's first degree was Engineering Science from Edinburgh University, followed by a postgraduate diploma in Digital Systems Engineering from Heriot-Watt.

Debbie Kent has spent the last 18 months working for the Visual Arts Data Service on the PICTIVA project. As EDINA Project Officer she will assist in the running of the Digimap FE service and also in supporting the e-MapScholar project.

James Reid recently joined the Geo-Services Delivery Team. He is a GIS software engineer with degrees in geography, town planning and GIS. Previous employers include Forth Valley GIS, The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Queens University and the NI Regional Research Laboratory. James's main responsibility will be the delivery, maintenance and development of the UKBORDERS Service and business development in the Geo-Services area.

Tim Riley started as Geo Data Support Officer on 1st November and will work along Emma Sutton supporting users of Digimap and UKBORDERS. He has a first degree in Environmental Science and obtained a masters degree in Geographic Information Systems from Edinburgh University in 1996. Since then he has worked as GIS Officer for Planning and Development in Scottish Borders Council and as a Technical/GIS Consultant for CAPS Solutions Ltd, a provider of information system solutions to Local Government.

New EDINA Web Pages

The EDINA web site is undergoing a make-over, and will be ready with a new look for 2002.

The current EDINA web site, which was launched in 1998, needs updating to accommodate new developments at EDINA, and to reflect current design trends.

We have looked at the type of information we make available, and the typical tasks users perform, and have built a navigation structure that users will easily find their way around. The new web site will have searching throughout, and enhanced metadata to help the search engine find the right pages first time.

Accessibility

Here at EDINA we take it as read that all information provided should as far as possible be available to people of all abilities. To this end, JISC have arranged to have the new web pages audited for accessibility. This audit will be a key factor in making sure the web site holds no obstacles for any of our users.

A better user experience

The aim of the new web site is to get people to the information they are seeking quickly and easily - and to look good in the process! We will be inviting site reps and other interested parties to review the site during December, for a launch early in the new year.

Forthcoming Events

EDINA will have a stand at the **RGS/IBG - Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) Conference 2002** at Queen's University, Belfast 2-6 January 2002 For more information and bookings see: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/geog/documents/ibg/>

EDINA will be exhibiting at several other events in the new year. For the latest events information, including dates of workshops, see <http://edina.ed.ac.uk/docs/events.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
- Art Index Retrospective
- BIOSIS
- CAB Abstracts
- Digimap®
- EconLit
- Ei Compendex®
- ESPMD
- Index to the Times, 1790-1980
- INSPEC
- Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts
- MLA International Bibliography
- PAIS International
- Palmer's Index to The Times
- SALSER
- Social Services Abstracts
- Sociological Abstracts
- The Statistical Accounts of Scotland
- UKBORDERS™
- Ulrich's™ Periodicals Directory

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EDINA contacts

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 Email: edina@ed.ac.uk URL: <http://edina.ac.uk>

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 and the Statistical Accounts of Scotland are completely free services, with no subscription fee. No licence or prior registration is required.

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