Welcome to the first edition of EDINA Newsline!

Newsline is written for librarians and other academic support staff in UK higher education. The EDINA User Services Team hope you will find Newsline to be a useful complement to existing forms of documentation and communication about EDINA. Our intention is to keep you abreast of new developments and changes in the EDINA national data services. Newsline will carry announcements about new and revised documentation, dates of training workshops, and other items of interest to EDINA users. It will also provide useful pointers to other on-line resources in the UK electronic library, and beyond.

Newsline will appear quarterly, in print, and copies of each issue will be distributed free to all EDINA sites. Each new issue will be announced on various mailing lists, including lis-link, and edina-all, and an electronic version will be made available from the EDINA web server at http://edina.ed.ac.uk/.

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The Making of EDINA

EDINA was officially launched as a JISC-funded National Dataset Centre on Burn’s Night, January 25, 1996. This was a fine occasion to celebrate, with speeches from John Arbuthnott (Chair of JISC) and Derek Law (Chair of the JISC Information Services Sub-Committee). The University of Edinburgh’s Principal and Vice-Principal were also on hand to greet guests, including representatives from the EDINA user community, data vendors, and other JISC-funded services. The launch provided an opportunity to recognise six months of hard work, having put EDINA BIOSIS into service in December 1995, and to draw breath before six more months of hard work to put EDINA PCI (Periodical Contents Index) into service.

EDINA is hosted by the Edinburgh University Data Library, which has managed a ‘library’ of data for research and teaching ever since it was first set up in 1983 to provide on-line access to data from population and agricultural censuses to researchers in the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Strathclyde. In the last decade or so, the Data Library has become an established resource base for a diverse range of datasets, and now provides a variety of support services for research and for library activities.

As one might expect, we chose the name EDINA after much deliberation. At present, EDINA is an acronym for Edinburgh Information and Data Access. The ‘N’ might also stand for National or Network, but that would be to disturb the metre. Given our history, we have been reluctant to abandon the name “Data Library” since this term embodies a lot of good practice, and it connects us to the international data library movement. So we played with the idea of recognising our new remit with the name datalibUK. Another candidate was The Data Library, and we continue to use that title as a descriptive term for all our activities. However, since BIDS has a ‘B’ for Bath, and MIDAS has an ‘M’ for Manchester, the consensus was that we needed an ‘E’ for Edinburgh!

It so happens that EDINA features in the opening lines of the Address to Edinburgh, a poem written by Robert Burns in 1786 when he first came to live in Edinburgh. “Edina, Scotia’s darling seat!” is the opening line.

Search the Web on the term EDINA and you will see the accolade, Absolutely Fabulous. Although we are not taken in by this flattery, we have been giving our best to build an organisation with talented individuals and appropriate software/hardware, capable and motivated to play a positive role in the electronic library for UK higher education.

[PMB]
The Challenge of User Registration

There are over a million staff and students in two hundred or so UK higher education institutions (HEIs). The challenge for national on-line data centres is to make it easy for these individuals to get access to the various data services that make up the UK electronic library.

The process of getting access involves three stages. First, each HEI decides whether to subscribe to each dataset service. The second stage is user registration. The third stage is that of user authentication, whereby the data centre ensures that only staff and students from subscribing UK HEIs have access. This need for limited access requires username and password authentication.

User registration actually involves academic support staff in two tasks. One is to ensure that the prospective user has signed his/her awareness and agreement to comply with the conditions of use that apply to the particular dataset. There is scope to make this easier for most datasets by encouraging HEIs to include suitable statements in the regulations that staff and student sign for local email, computing or library facilities. The other task is the allocation of user account ids and passwords, whether these be individual ids or group ids. We believe that individual accounts are both desirable from the end user’s point of view and, with the move towards Web access, are to be regarded as inevitable. However, we appreciate that, with the growth in the electronic library, end users are having to use a different login name and password for each of these services. Each HEI already operates a system of individual userids and login names for local services such as email and campus computing facilities.

One proposal under discussion is to define a two part common login name for each individual, the AccessID, that would be recognised by all the JISC-funded data services. The first part would be a three-character HEI code (eg, the UCAS code), the second part an individual code. For system reasons, the login name currently has to be no more than eight characters, which puts restrictions on the individual component. The options appear to be to base this on the person’s proper name or the local userid, or to allow each registered user to nominate a preferred login name for the national data services. Whatever is chosen as the basis for this naming convention, there is still the need for a semi-automatic, but secure system whereby eligible (prospective) users can be allocated this AccessID, without a large administrative burden for academic staff. This needs to be able to cope with a large number of individuals joining and leaving HEIs every year. An email, mailbase-like system has been mooted, but this may not be sufficiently secure.

The problem of how to make individual user registration, and associated user authentication, sufficiently easy and secure against abuse to satisfy all parties, including the vendors, is a problem exercising policy makers and national data centres alike. The aim is to find a common solution across all the JISC-funded on-line data services. There are several initiatives currently underway, including one for a national system of strong authentication. Unfortunately, there would seem to be no quick fix. Just what will be attempted for this forthcoming academic session is not yet agreed. EDINA and the other national dataset centres are discussing how to respond in the short term to the calls for simpler systems but each must also prepare for the fast approaching academic session — and some HEIs have September semesters. At the time of writing, things are still in a state of flux. This is an instance when we must accept the limits of the print distribution medium and recommend use of the electronic.

We will send news to our Site Representatives by email if and when change is agreed. Meanwhile, we suggest that you check our Web site (http://edina.ed.ac.uk/) for up-to-date information. We would also appreciate hearing your views by email (edina@ed.ac.uk). I guess we know it ain’t easy. . . .

[AB and PMB]

Who’s Who at EDINA

EDINA has two service teams: the Service Delivery Team, responsible for ensuring reliable, and user-friendly access to the datasets, and the User Services Team, responsible for ensuring support for users through effective liaison with the academic support staff in higher education institutions. These two teams work together to ensure that the user interface to EDINA’s on-line data services is developed in a way that best serves the needs of users. From the start, we have taken advantage of the expertise and advice available from within the library world, working closely with specialists at the Edinburgh University Library and their colleagues at other university libraries throughout the UK. Early in the development of the interface to EDINA BIOSIS we recruited a team of volunteer ‘field-testers’ who put the interface through its paces and offered us helpful feedback. The field-testers’ comments on BIOSIS also proved to be useful in developing the interfaces to PCI and Palmer’s Index.

User Services Team

Dawn Griesbach documentation editor, webmaster
Katia Hazelton registration, helpdesk
Margarete Tubby outreach and training

Service Delivery Team

Heather Ewington database design, World Wide Web interface development
Alan Ferguson Unix system administration, general software and hardware support
John Murison database design, telnet interface development

Service Specialists

Heather Ewington SALSER
Heather Larnach RAPID
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EDINA Policy and Administration

Peter Burnhill Director
Sheila Cannell Associate Director
Alison Bayley EDINA Co-ordinator
Alison Wallace Administrator

All members of the EDINA Team may be contacted at edina@ed.ac.uk.
What’s New at EDINA

New version of EDINA BIOSIS implemented

If you have used EDINA BIOSIS since the start of August you will have noticed that its appearance has changed. Although the facilities are largely similar we hope that their presentation is better and that the interface is easier to navigate. The changes were made after hearing the views of a large number of field testers, from all over the country, who have been trying out earlier versions of the new BIOSIS interface for several months.

The main differences between the new and the old versions are as follows:

- Once an operation is complete, the behaviour of the interface (e.g. the next screen displayed) is sometimes different from the previous version. Such changes were made to clarify navigation through the interface.
- The appearance of the command prompts on the screen can now be changed by the user (see ‘O Options, Limits’).
- ‘Filters’ are now known as ‘Limits’ throughout the interface, by popular request.

- Display and Output options are now provided to suppress the initial screen summarising options, prior to documents being displayed or output.
- An option is now provided to determine whether search queries are to be saved after a search (see ‘O Options, Limits’). If not, they can be saved later by use of the ‘K Keep’ command.
- The handling and reporting of marked documents has been improved. During the Display of the documents resulting from a search, a numerically ordered list of those marked by the user is displayed. Once the Display command is complete, the M command (to display only marked documents) can be used to check that all is well before emailing or screen dumping them (by use of the P command).

Other changes and improvements are at present being considered. If you have any suggestions to make, please let us know!

[JM]

Periodicals Contents Index (PCI) now up and running

In mid-July, the eagerly-awaited EDINA PCI database was put on-line and made available to registered EDINA users. PCI provides access to bibliographic data compiled from the tables of contents of thousands of English and European-language journals in the humanities and social sciences. The data covers information on these journals from their date of issue to 1990. All PCI article citations are assigned one of 37 broad subject headings (eg, Anthropology/Ethnology, Performing Arts, Music, Business/Management), and users may search for records on the basis of these categories.

Notes on the Data

- The information in the Author field is not entered in a consistent format. In some cases, this field contains the author’s complete first name and surname; in others, it contains surname and first initial; and in yet others, it contains surname only.

Because of these inconsistencies, we recommend that users search the Author field using the surname only, except in the case of very common surnames. In this case, it will be best to search on the author’s surname, first initial and the asterisk (*) to truncate. For example: Hymes D*

- Very few of the records have article summaries. Therefore, if users attempt to increase the amount of detail presented during Display or Output, the Summary field name will be shown, but for many records no summary will be given.
- Not all of the PCI data is available yet. The copyright owner of the data, Chadwyck-Healey, Inc, is still in the process of publishing PCI. The estimated date of completion is 1998/99. Moreover, EDINA has not yet received all of the data that has been published, although we hope that all of the published data will be available through EDINA by the beginning of the autumn term.

PCI on the Web

One of the nice features of Chadwyck-Healey’s CD-ROM version of PCI is the browsable lists that are available for most of the search fields. EDINA is now in the process of building a web interface to PCI, which will be available by the autumn term. This web interface will provide a user-friendly interface to PCI that will mimic the functionality of the CD-ROM’s browsable lists. Users will be required to enter their username and password in order to have access to the web interface.

[DG]

All PCI documentation is available via the EDINA web pages at: http://edina.ed.ac.uk/pci/doc.html.

At the moment, this documentation includes: a complete list of the PCI subject headings; the core journal titles list; a list of the countries of publication; a list of the languages represented in the data; and the PCI Quick Reference Guide. It is not necessary to enter a username and password to get access to this information.
For your diary

Sep 4-5, 1996: Libtech International ’96, University of Hertfordshire. Representatives of the EDINA User Services Team will be available at exhibition stand #96, to answer your questions and to give demonstrations. EDINA will also take part in the JIBS User Group meeting, (Wednesday afternoon) and the session entitled, CHEST — what can it do for you?

Oct 1, 1996: Free! EDINA BIOSIS Training Workshop, University of Edinburgh. For information about registration, please visit our web pages at: http://edina.ed.ac.uk/biosis/train-oct1.html, or contact the EDINA Helpdesk at edina@ed.ac.uk.

Palmer’s Index to The Times On-line at EDINA

Palmer’s Index to The Times is the only index to articles in The Times newspaper, for every issue from October 1790 to December 1905. Samuel Palmer, a London bookseller and publisher, started his work in 1867, and produced quarterly editions of his index for both current and past issues of The Times. Although he died in 1899, the work was continued by his successors to achieve complete coverage of the newspaper from its inception until 1905.

The index, comprising nearly four million individual items, is an invaluable reference for historians of the 19th century, in all areas of British life and international affairs. EDINA Palmer’s Index, which has just become available on-line to subscribing higher educational institutions, provides networked access to this important reference, and allows researchers to do keyword searches, or to search on the basis of a broad subject index. For example, there are more than 8,000 references to “Gladstone” in the database!

A quick reference guide to the database will be available for the start of the new academic year.

Edinburgh Data & Information Access

EDINA, based at Edinburgh University Data Library, is one of five JISC-funded national dataset centres. It offers the UK higher education and research community networked access to a library of data, information and research resources. All EDINA services are available free of charge to members of UK higher education institutions for academic use, although university subscription and end-user registration is required for some services.

EDINA Services

- EDINA BIOSIS provides networked access to BIOSIS Previews®, the electronic version of Biological Abstracts (BA) and Biological Abstracts/RRM (Reports, Reviews, Meetings). The database contains bibliographic information for thousands of publications from more than 90 countries from 1985 onwards. Subjects included range from all areas of biology and related fields such as agriculture, pharmacology, biophysics, ecology, bioengineering, and experimental clinical medicine.

- EDINA PCI (Periodicals Contents Index) provides detailed and comprehensive on-line access to references to the periodical literature of the humanities and social sciences. It contains information from the tables of contents of thousands of English and other European language journals, from their dates of issue to 1990. PCI is still in the process of being published by Chadwyck-Healey and will be completed in 1998/9.

- EDINA Palmer’s Index to The Times, also published by Chadwyck-Healey, is the only index to articles in The Times newspaper for every issue from October 1790 to December 1905.

- SALSER is a World Wide Web based union catalogue of the serials holdings of all Scottish universities, the National Library of Scotland and a number of other Scottish libraries, with ‘hot-links’ to the participating libraries’ OPACs.

- RAPID (the Research Activities and Publications Information Database) contains summary information on research activities funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), along with associated publications and other products.

- UKBORDERS is the most comprehensive database of UK digitised boundaries available, providing boundary data at the level of Census Enumeration Districts and/or Output Areas, unit postcodes (in Scotland) and a variety of higher-order boundaries. UKBORDERS allows users to get access to digitised boundary data in a format suitable for use in their own computing environment.

EDINA Subscription and Registration

A number of EDINA services require the completion of a licence agreement before those services can be made available to users at higher education institutions.

For BIOSIS, the Periodicals Contents Index and Palmer’s Index to The Times, licence agreements must be obtained from CHEST (email chest@chest.ac.uk) and a subscription fee must be paid. Individual users must also register.

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 RAPID are completely free services, with no subscription fee. No licence or prior registration is required.

When you need help or further info, contact the members of the EDINA User Services Team:

Dawn Griesbach: documentation, webmaster
Katia Hazelton: registration, EDINA helpdesk
Margarete Tubby: outreach and training

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