EDINA gets artistic

HW Wilson Art Abstracts database

ANDREW BEVAN

EDINA has been awarded a contract by JISC to run the Art Abstracts database service. The availability of this database to the Higher Education community is the result of a recent CHEST licence agreement.

Art Abstracts represents a broadening of the subject coverage under the EDINA umbrella and provides us with the challenge of making contacts in a different part of the academic sector.

The HW Wilson Art Abstracts database comprises the bibliographic contents of 280 leading art periodicals — journals, yearbooks and museum bulletins — in over 20 subject areas. These are as diverse as Archaeology and Photography, but also cover the general fields of Art History, Graphic Arts and Performing Arts. Unusually, art reproductions that appear are also fully indexed and summarised even when they appear without accompanying text. In addition to these and abstracts for feature articles, references can be found to interviews, film and book reviews, exhibition listings and conference reports.

Combining elements of other EDINA services, Art Abstracts is both a current contents and a historical database. Coverage starts in 1984, and from 1994 includes abstracts for all entries. HW Wilson’s stated intention is to extend coverage back to 1929. Currently there are around 400,000 records for the period 1984 to 1997 and, with regular monthly updates, the database increases at a rate of 30,000 records per year. The journals are mainly English language but include a number of titles in other European languages. For ease of use, abstracts are all in English and are free-text searchable. The Art Abstracts titles overlap to an extent with PCI: together, the two databases will be a reference source for articles from the late 18th century to the present. As with PCI, these journal titles are widely held in academic libraries. Thus what is being provided is another valuable research tool, further enlivening library holdings.

We have designed a Web interface for the database using OCLC SiteSearch, the software used for PCI-Web, which we hope is both intuitive and user-friendly. The structure allows for simple and advanced searching as well as providing a limits option to refine results. Art Abstracts will have all the current PCI-Web options with certain extra features such as session histories to retrieve and combine searches. The obvious benefit of having common software will be that improvements are implemented more quickly with the parallel development of both databases.

Looking further ahead, the aim — as with PCI-Web — is to connect the database to holdings catalogues using Z39.50 compliance. Thus having identified an article and journal, it will be possible to locate it. For the time being, though, making the electronic equivalent of printed volumes totalling well over a million pages accessible from a desktop-computer is no mean feat in itself!

Art Abstracts through EDINA will be available from January with a variable-pricing scheme for institutional subscriptions. End-user registration will be in line with other services accessible through EDINA and will follow the same timetable for the migration to ATHENS3 registration.

Further information on Art Abstracts, including the full list of subjects and journal titles, can be found at: http://edina.ed.ac.uk/art-abstracts
EDINA’s journey to ATHENS: an update

MARGARETE TUBBY

The first two steps have been taken. In November, NISS put ATHENS3 into service; EDINA linked in on 1 December. Our work having progressed well, we planned to take the plunge sooner. However, we decided to extend the test period so that sites opting for an early change might have a trouble-free start.

Over the past month there has been a lively discussion on the ATHENS mailbase list (athens@mailbase.ac.uk). We were pleased to see that the debate endorsed our decision to extend the transitional period for end-users to 31 August 1998, in recognition of the fact that institutions have different academic years.

Another issue has been the question of access shared accounts versus personal accounts. ATHENS3 allows considerable flexibility. But remember that the EDINA databases are designed for use with personal user IDs: consequently EDINA services cannot be used from ATHENS3 access shared accounts.

There has also been a vigorous exchange of ideas in response to practical questions, such as, “how will uploading work?”; “will the server be able to cope?”, and many more. NISS provide answers through detailed documentation such as FAQs and Administrator and User Guides, available at http://athens.ac.uk. Additional help is available from the ATHENS helpdesk (athens@niss.ac.uk) or from EDINA (edina@ed.ac.uk).

Co-operative Action on Serials and Articles: CASA and SALSER

PETER BURNHILL

Edinburgh University Data Library, the host organisation for EDINA, is involved in a number of development projects intended to enhance its services. One such project is CASA. This began in January 1997 as a two-phase, three-year project led by the University of Bologna and funded as part of the EU Telematics for Libraries Programme (Project LB4058/B CASA). Phase Two is about to get underway.

At the heart of the CASA project is the strategic use of ISSN-based identifiers. By enhancing the ISSN Register, so that all serials have an ISSN, and making the ISSN Register available across the Internet, so that all serials records can include the ISSN, CASA will help to automate transactions in the virtual library of serials and articles. This will assist the work of professional users in libraries, bibliographic agencies, publishing houses, union catalogue consortia and national ISSN Centres, and hence end users seeking articles of interest.

The ISSN International Centre in Paris is a CASA partner, and the ISSN World Serials Register is to be built into the CASA foundations. Other participants include three national ISSN Centres and four union catalogues for serials, including SALSER. As part of the project we are planning to re-design SALSER (“virtual union catalogue meets the serials authority file”) in order to improve inter-operability with other bibliographic facilities.

The ISSN is the linchpin in the “discover - locate - request - access” user activity chain. Its significance will also grow as the use of the SICI (Serial Item Contribution Identifier) and DOI (Digital Object Identifier) protocols increases.

http://www.casa.issn.org/1999/
Ordnance Survey Strategi data now available

BARBARA MORRIS

EDINA is pleased to announce that the OS Strategi™ dataset is now available for research and teaching purposes in UK Higher Education Institutions under a special licensing agreement between Ordnance Survey and the University of Edinburgh. To subscribe to this service, each institution is required to hold a current and valid Ordnance Survey Educational Copyright Licence (£250 + VAT per annum from OS), and to pay an annual subscription to EDINA (£200 + VAT).

OS Terms of Use mean that once an institution has registered with EDINA to use OS Strategi, staff and students who are supported by the institution or by the Research Councils may register to use these data. Unfortunately, not everyone in your institution may be eligible to register: for example, those funded by the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, the Wellcome Foundation or other charities are excluded. Commercial usage is also excluded. Ordnance Survey does not currently recognise the wide range of non-commercial funding bodies which now support academic teaching and research. This situation may change in the future.

OS Strategi can be used as a decision-making tool in a planning or analytical environment. As the digital representation of the Travelmaster®, map series, it enables users to link their own spatially referenced information with up-to-date geographic data. OS Strategi is ideal for use as a backdrop screen display for graphic output, or as an index map into other applications. It is currently used in Digimap, a JISC-funded project within the Electronic Libraries Programme (eLib); see http://digimap.ed.ac.uk:8081/ for details. OS Strategi is compatible with market leading GIS software and is a geometrically structured 1:250 000 scale vector database that defines the real world geographic entities (objects) as point and line features. Each feature consists of geometric and attribute data. Co-ordinate resolution is 1.0 metre.

Features of the Strategi data include:

- a communications layer containing road, rail, airports and ferry routes
- a hydrology layer including coastline, rivers, lakes and reservoirs, and canals
- a settlement layer with cities and towns
- administrative boundaries
- woods and land use
- all cartographically positioned names on the printed Travelmaster maps

If you have not already contacted us and are interested in registering your institution to use OS Strategi, contact the EDINA Help Desk at edina@ed.ac.uk

UKBORDERs to get new look in early 1998

PAUL BEDWORTH

UKBORDERs is an on-line retrieval system providing access to the most comprehensive range of digital boundary datasets available for the UK. A new interface is being developed for UKBORDERs which will also incorporate additional functionality with respect to the version currently in service. Changes which directly affect the ‘look and feel’ of the service include:

- full incorporation of menu options for historical data
- restriction of user choice to realistic options
- the ability to see a preview of the extracted boundaries when retrieving data from a Web browser (see figure)

A new and improved generalisation algorithm will also be added to the interface. This will allow users to control the size and detail of boundary data extracted from UKBORDERs. The new interface is expected to go into service early next year.

A preview image of England and Wales boundaries as displayed on a Web browser.
EDINA staff changes

UKBORDERS users may be aware of recent staff changes. In September we said goodbye to Anne Davidson, who had been working full-time on UKBORDERS support during her year’s stay with us. Anne has now emigrated from the UK to settle in Australia, and she goes with our very best wishes. Her predecessor, Alistair Towers, returned from a year-long round-the-world trip and rejoined EDINA at the end of October. He is currently supporting the UKBORDERS service, as well as working on a geospatial research project.

Heather Larnach left us in the Summer, to take up a post in Edinburgh University Management Information Services. Heather worked on a number of projects and services in the Data Library, including the RAPID service which she managed with her usual care and attention to detail.

Finally, at the end of October Ben Soares joined EDINA, having just completed his studies at St Andrews University. On his arrival he was immediately plunged into the OCLC SiteSearch software, and has already made an impact on EDINA services. He is our lead technical developer on the forthcoming Art Abstracts service. In addition to his computing prowess, however, Ben has another claim to fame — he is a world tiddlywinks record-holder!

SALSER user guide in press

One of EDINA’s most frequently used services is SALSER (Scottish Academic Libraries SERials). SALSER is a free Internet-based service which enables users to get information about the serials holdings of the Scottish university and research libraries. In response to demands from users, EDINA has produced a User Guide for the service. This 10-page A5 booklet was created on the basis of input from librarians at participating SALSER libraries. It provides details — with pictures — about what is in the database, how to search for a serial title (both via the Web and via Telnet), and how to login to the OPACs of participating libraries.

The User Guide is currently in press, and copies will be distributed to all SALSER libraries early in the new year. It will be available in downloadable form via http://edina.ed.ac.uk/docs/#documentation

Edinburgh Data & Information Access

EDINA, based at Edinburgh University Data Library, is a JISC-funded national datacentre. 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 are:

- EDINA Art Abstracts
- EDINA BIOSIS
- Ordnance Survey Strategi™
- EDINA PCI (Periodicals Contents Index)

EDINA subscription and registration

Some EDINA services require the completion of a licence agreement before those services can be made available to users.

For Art Abstracts, 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 register locally at their library.

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.

For OS Strategi, each institution is required to hold a current and valid Ordnance Survey Educational Copyright Licence (£250 + VAT per annum), plus a subscription to EDINA (£200 + VAT per annum). Contact EDINA in the first instance (email edina@ed.ac.uk).

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

Reference cards

Reference cards for EDINA BIOSIS, PCI and Palmer’s Index to The Times are available for purchase at £12/100. They are also available free from the EDINA Web pages in PDF and PostScript formats.

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EDINA subscribes to the following services:

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