

# EDINA 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Issue



## Newsline

Vol. 3.4: Winter 1998/99

## Happy Birthday EDINA!

### From *Reg Carr*, Chair of the JISC Committee for Electronic Information

IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE that so much is being written about the JISC Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER), in this Birthday Edition of *EDINA Newsline* and elsewhere. The DNER is the main focus of policy for the JISC's Committee for Electronic Information (CEI), and I hope that readers of *Newsline* will already be aware of its development, and will become involved in its implementation. As a national datacentre, EDINA has a key part to play in supporting the collaboration and enabling technology required to bring about cost-effective, integrated access for the HE community to the information riches of our institutions. So, also, do the staff in universities who act as EDINA site representatives.

Four years ago, as part of the community's response to the Follett Review, CEI's predecessor committee (the ISSC, chaired by Derek Law) began to address the information infrastructure needed to support research, learning and teaching in UK higher education. It launched a programme of projects, which we now know as the eLib Programme, to investigate the complex range of issues involved in building the digital library. In 1995, it also decided to increase the number of JISC-designated national datacentres from the two which existed then (BIDS and MIDAS). Following an open competition, this led to the designation of Edinburgh University Data Library as the third JISC datacentre.

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### From *Derek Law*, Chair of the EDINA Steering Group (former Chair of ISSC)

BIRTHDAYS ARE ABOUT looking both forward and back. As EDINA reaches what is calculated in the dog years of computing as a healthy maturity, it is difficult to remember the world of even five years ago, with no web, poorly mediated if substantial on-line searching and the publication of articles which could describe the JISC datasets strategy as "pragmatism in pursuit of a policy" and the whole activity as a "giant leap in the dark". It is also worth reflecting that the key attributes of "free at the point of use" and of "equal access for all" arrived as a result of battles that were fought and won rather than being natural rights. Thus the healthy maturity of datacentres is a matter for some pleasure, as they have contributed strongly to the development of electronic services in the UK, through the hard work and effort of policy committees and datacentre staff.

The future will, as always, prove difficult and exciting in equal measure. Clearly the development of electronic services will grow and develop. Clearly the government sees education as a key tool in the development of an information society. But the fissiparous tendencies, currently evident in the radical constitutional changes taking place and in the growth in England of the new and powerful regional development agencies, militate against national services and in favour of regional ones, while the studied parsimony of government towards higher education causes a permanent questioning of any top-sliced activity.

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However, in that over-used and hackneyed phrase, the trick for EDINA will be to turn the problems into opportunities. A Scottish-based service is particularly well placed to meet the challenges in the governance structure which is emerging. Two key features will drive this: the development of a national information policy for Scotland which is likely to be on the agenda of several political parties; and the thrust for the development of a Scottish parliamentary information service devoted to "digital democracy". Taken together these should lead to a sympathetic consideration of the national, UK-wide role and value of locally based information providers. Shortage of central funding has always been a difficulty for all JISC services. But again the opportunities are very real. Quite apart from the expansion of the customer base that the growth of JANET and of the MANs will allow, there are significant commercial opportunities which can be explored as routes for the development of new revenue streams.

Chairing the EDINA Steering Committee is a new role and challenge for me, but hardly a difficult one. EDINA celebrates its birthday with an established track record, a committed staff, a good portfolio of datasets and a clear sense of purpose.

So happy birthday to the datacentre – the future's bright, the future's EDINA!

## The DNER in 1999

by Chris Rusbridge (eLib Programme Director)

THE IDEA OF the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER) is firmly established as part of the JISC Strategy. The DNER would be open and standards-based where possible. It would support "joined-up retrieval" where items of interest could be identified through searching one or more bibliographic databases, and then full text versions of these items could be located and retrieved from a wide variety of sources.

It would allow not only searching in the bibliographic database of the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) and retrieval from the National Electronic Site Licence Initiative (NESLI), but also searching in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) or the Periodical Contents Index (PCI) and retrieval from archives of digitised resources such as Journal Storage (JSTOR) or the Internet Library of Early Journals (ILEJ).

If we had such a system, effective use of the digital library would be much closer.

However, full implementation of the DNER is not imminent; indeed the idea is still differently understood by different people. While that has been an advantage in some ways in 1998, I think 1999 has to be the year when the DNER is tackled in detail.

There are promising signs, including overseas projects which implement some of the concept in their particular circumstances, and software which might provide the basic underpinnings. We are negotiating with one software producer to make their product available to the community through CHEST. Z39.50 is a key technology; datacentres are moving now towards increasing the accessibility of their datasets through Z39.50, and the UK Office for Library and Information Networking (UKOLN) has appointed Paul Miller as Interoperability Focus to help resolve some of the interoperability issues in using Z39.50.

There are similarities between the idea of the DNER and some aspects of the Hybrid Library, so the work in the Hybrid Library projects (both JISC-funded and locally-funded) is also of relevance. Perhaps one way of expressing the difference is to say that the Hybrid Library provides elements of the DNER in a local context, amongst other services.

CEI has had lengthy discussions on the topic, including a weekend workshop, and I believe it hopes to make specific investments in implementing the DNER in 1999.

### Happy Birthday EDINA – continued from page 1

Launched as EDINA at the start of 1996, this now provides an impressive range of specialist online data services. The Data Library has also contributed to the eLib Programme through the successful Digimap project, an investigation into digital map data as electronic documents, assisting progress towards national online access to Ordnance Survey digital map data.

The three years during which EDINA has established itself as a specialist national datacentre have been marked by change and diversity, both in the commercial sector of the information economy and within the academic community itself. In the former, publishers and bibliographic database vendors have moved to become online service providers themselves, with some competing by offering their own proprietary links to electronic copies of documents. Academics have also begun to publish extensively on the World Wide Web. The DNER policy therefore seeks to embrace access to quality resources for research and teaching for which the higher education community needs to take responsibility, where it is inadvisable to wait for the commercial sector to act. The intention is to offer coherence through subject-based

## EDINA at Online

by Margarete Tubby

WE WENT ONLINE at Online for the first time, at our very own stand – shared with EEVL.

We have been represented in a major way at previous exhibitions, notably at Libtech, and at various, more subject specific events. But Online Information '98 has been the biggest event for us so far.

Our stand at Online reflected EDINA's multi-disciplinary approach, with colour-coding for each subject area we cover, including our latest faculty, Engineering, Informatics & Physical Science. This group of services signifies new ways in which EDINA works with others in the UK electronic library: with Ovid Technologies, in providing the INSPEC service; and with EEVL, the engineering subject gateway, with whom we share the success in becoming the data service provider for Ei Compendex®.

Our stand was very busy indeed. The majority of visitors came from university libraries, and INSPEC and the transfer of Ei Compendex® to EDINA were the hot topics. For many, this was the first opportunity to view the new EDINA Ei Compendex® service, launched for evaluation the day before the exhibition. There was no less interest in EEVL, and clearly our visitors welcomed the opportunity to ask questions about three different engineering resources at one stand.

Of course, the interest was not restricted to the engineering resources, and many took the opportunity to bring themselves up-to-date on our other services, including the CAB Abstracts trial which we had announced in time for the exhibition.

Librarians were not the only visitors to our stand, and we were pleased to see interest from 'real' users. Publishers whose data we host also dropped by to find out the latest news.

One of the reasons for travelling to an event like Online Information '98 is to meet others in the industry, and to talk face to face rather than by email. There was plenty of opportunity to strengthen links with existing partners, and to establish co-operation with new ones: for example, the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE, publishers of INSPEC) have assured us of their support in reaching out to INSPEC users, as have Engineering Information Inc. (Ei) for Compendex users.

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online facilities providing access to Internet resources (e.g. the Arts and Humanities Data Service and the subject-based gateways), as well as promote open standards and a framework for inter-working. The DNER also aims to provide a policy framework to avoid monopoly and to ensure value for money.

The services provided by the JISC datacentres will play a central part in the development of the DNER, and it is important that they work together to provide service-to-service access to their databases via the Z39.50 protocol, as well as end-user services offered via World Wide Web browsers. The commitment of the staff of EDINA to making the DNER a reality and a success is both evident and welcome. The joint EDINA/EEVL initiative to establish cross-searching across specialist bibliographic databases to benefit scholars and trainee professionals in Engineering, Informatics and the Physical Sciences is a significant move, and should prove a valuable platform for future contributions to enhance and develop the DNER.

I am pleased to be able to wish EDINA 'many happy returns' on its birthday!

# Review of EDINA Services

by John Murison

AS EDINA ENTERS its fourth year of existence, it is timely to review the progress we have made in providing database services to UK Higher Education. A brief glance at recent issues of *Newsline* makes it clear that new services have been announced and existing ones revised at a remarkable rate, as well as valuable partnerships being formed with organisations able to enhance our usefulness to the community – OCLC, Ovid, EEVL, the CTIs, etc. We expect that our current portfolio of services will extend further in 1999 and that the areas of expertise which we have been developing, namely *i) Agriculture, Environment & Life Sciences*, *ii) Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences* and *iii) Engineering, Informatics & Physical Sciences*, will become well-established components of “the Distributed National Electronic Resource” (the DNER - see various articles in this *Newsline*).

## Agriculture, Environment & Life Sciences

**BIOSIS:** The leading biological database. A revised EDINA interface has just been released. Authority list facilities for some database fields will be added by Easter. A Web interface will be available for Beta testing before the end of the academic year.

**CAB Abstracts:** Launched in December as an EDINA service, this database from CAB International 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 service covers the years from 1973 to the present date, and is updated quarterly.

**ESPM:** The Environmental Sciences and Pollution Management Database, from Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, provides comprehensive multi-disciplinary coverage across the environmental sciences.

## Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

**Art Abstracts:** EDINA Art Abstracts provides a Web interface to the bibliographic contents of 280 leading Art periodicals.

**Palmer's Index:** An index to the articles in *The Times* newspaper, from October 1790 to December 1905. In addition to the existing Telnet interface, a Web interface is due to be released later this year.

**PCI:** Tables of contents information from thousands of journals in the humanities and social sciences. Both a Telnet and a Web interface are offered. The Web interface is due to be completely revised for the academic year 1999/2000.

## Engineering, Informatics & Physical Sciences

**INSPEC:** An Ovid Web interface to the leading English language bibliographic service for scientific and technical literature in physics, electrical engineering, computer science, etc.

**Ei Compendex®:** The most comprehensive interdisciplinary engineering database available. A trial service was released in early December 1998; the full service was released in early January. User profiling facilities and interoperability enhancements will be released during 1999.

## Holdings Discovery

**SALSER:** A virtual union catalogue of serials holdings in Scottish libraries. A completely new Web interface to SALSER has just completed its Beta test and will be going into service in the near future.

## Geographic Information

**UKBORDERS:** An on-line retrieval system providing the most comprehensive range of contemporary and historical digital boundary datasets available for the UK. A new Web interface was released in 1998.

**Ordnance Survey Strategi®:** Sourced from 1:250 000 scale data, Strategi® is set to continue as a service at the reduced price of £100 + VAT with 1997 NTF data (currently the most recent). The subscription period runs from 1 February 1999 to 31 January 2000, or until the proposed JISC national subscription service to supply Ordnance Survey digital map data to all UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) commences, whichever is earlier. The national service, to which all HEIs were invited to subscribe (JISC Circular 12/98), and of which Strategi® will be a part, is scheduled to begin on 30 September 1999. New EDINA Strategi® subscribers are welcome.

EDINA is currently negotiating with several data providers in order to extend this range of services. EDINA is also engaged in development projects, which we hope will result in further services being made available for the academic year 1999/2000.

## EDINA at Online – continued from page 2

Indeed, one of the highlights was the launch of the new Ei Compendex® service at the Ei stand, complete with photo session involving representatives from Ei, CHEST and EDINA. A little earlier that afternoon, at OCLC's SiteSearch seminar, EDINA team members Ben Soares and Andrew Bevan presented a case study of our use of the SiteSearch software and Z39.50.

Was exhibiting at Online 98 worth the expense incurred? We think so. Our users and our partners welcomed the opportunity for a chat and a service demonstration at our stand, and delegates at the

JIBS User Group AGM were able to see us after the meeting to continue discussions. Being an Exhibitor also had the important side benefit of allowing us to distribute entry tickets to our site reps – they seem to have been well used. Maybe the question is not ‘What do we gain by exhibiting?’, but rather ‘What would we lose by not exhibiting?’

So will we be there again next year? DNER at Online? Probably yes, and, we hope, at a bigger stand shared with other JISC-supported data service providers. See you there!

## Staff News

by Paul Milne

A number of new staff come on board recently. Here's an overview of the new faces to be seen around the office:

**Moira Massey** started in September and is the Teaching Support Officer for Digimap, co-ordinating the development of teaching packs in several subject areas. She also helps support of Site Representatives and users of the Digimap Trial Service. Moira did her MSc in Information Management at the University of Strathclyde, and has considerable experience in Internet training.



**Allan Kelly** began in January as Software Engineer in the Service Delivery team. He previously worked for the Institute of Ecology and Resource Management, also at the University of Edinburgh, as Software Engineer for the



ModMed project, which studied desertification processes in the Mediterranean area.

Also new in Service Delivery, **Morag Macgregor** began in December. Morag studied – with considerable success – Physics at the University of Edinburgh and Information Technology at Heriot-Watt University.



**Stuart Macdonald**, in User Support, divides his time between the EDINA Helpdesk and acting as Data Library Assistant, where his duties will include

assisting Data Library users to acquire and register datasets. Stuart previously worked in the University of Edinburgh Main Library, as Catalogue Editor for Bibliographic Services.

And last but not least, **Helen Strain** (Software Engineer for Service Delivery) has taken time off to have a baby. Helen has played key roles in User Support and Service Delivery, and we wish her all the best.

## Courses and Events

### BIOSIS Workshops

*11th February:* Wolfson Suite, Main Library, University of Edinburgh.

*18th February:* King's College, London

*25th February:* The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

*For each session:*

Morning workshop: introduction

Afternoon workshop: advanced

Booking: for more information contact: edina@ed.ac.uk

### UKBORDERS: Visualizing and Exploring Census Data

*Wed. 24th Feb 10am - 4 pm:* University of Manchester in the Computer Building on Oxford Road. The Lascelles Williams Training Suite and the Small Training Room are situated on the ground floor.

*Wed. 10th Mar 10am - 4 pm:* University of London Computer Centre, 20 Guilford Street, London WC1. Red Training Room.

*Tutors:* A. Towers and J. Carter

*Booking:* For Manchester courses, contact the MIDAS Help line (Tel: 0161 275 6109) or email: info@midas.ac.uk. For London courses, contact the London Office (Tel: 0171 692 1235/1363) or email: london@mcc.ac.uk

**EDINA will be demonstrating its services during Libtech International '99 at Olympia, London, 29-31 March 1999. Visit us at stand 450.**

## Edinburgh Data & Information Access

<http://edina.ed.ac.uk>

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 most services.

EDINA services are:

- EDINA Art Abstracts
- EDINA BIOSIS
- EDINA CAB Abstracts
- EDINA Ei Compendex®
- EDINA INSPEC
- ESPMD
- EDINA Palmer's Index to The Times
- EDINA PCI
- Ordnance Survey Strategi®
- SALSER
- UKBORDERS

### Reference cards

Reference cards for most EDINA services are available for purchase at £12/100. They are also available free from the EDINA Web pages in PDF and PostScript formats.

### EDINA contacts

Helen Kerr, Claudia Gröpl, and Stuart Macdonald (Helpdesk)  
Margarete Tubby (User Services Manager)  
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Email: edina@ed.ac.uk URL: <http://edina.ed.ac.uk>

## EDINA subscription and registration

Some 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.

For most services, 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. If in doubt, check with the EDINA website.

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 Ordnance Survey Strategi, each institution is required to hold a current and valid Ordnance Survey Educational Copyright Licence in addition to a subscription to EDINA. 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.

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