

# C onnections

Issue No 2  
Winter 1992

## IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue of Connections we continue to explore the technological themes raised in the first issue. Articles include on-line services for school libraries and an exploration of an innovative use of networked CD-ROMs by Andrew Perry at Vermont Primary School.

Other articles include: all you ever wanted to know about how the cataloguing agencies actually work; some tips on how to use the SCIS bulletin board and electronic mail facility; and some sad news at the cessation of the Curriculum Information Network.

Your comments on the newsletter or any other aspects of the SCIS operation are welcome. Please write to The Editor c/- Curriculum Corporation.

Dianne Lewis

## ON-LINE SERVICES FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

### On-line - What is it?

An on-line service will allow you, your teachers and students to connect via personal computer and telephone line to the world. For moderate charges you can access newspaper databases and download full-text articles, or access bibliographic databases.

### What are the hardware requirements?

To access on-line services you need:

- a (preferably direct) telephone line;

If you operate through a switchboard with an STD bar, it makes it extremely difficult to call any interstate services, or services such as Telecom's Discovery, with an access number beginning with 0.

- a computer (almost any computer will do, Apple, IBM, BBC)
- a modem and communications software.

Communications software often comes with the modem, or you can purchase commercial or shareware software. Some integrated programs such as MS WORKS, have communications software incorporated into them.

To minimise telecommunications and on-line charges, especially when searching full-text newspaper databases a 2400 baud modem is

Order now from:



Garden Terrace  
St Nicholas Place  
141 Rathdowne Street  
Carlton South  
Victoria 3053

Postal Address:  
PO Box 177  
Carlton South  
Victoria 3053

Tel: (03) 639 0699  
Fax: (03) 639 1616

School Help Line  
(008) 337 405  
(A FREE call for schools  
from anywhere  
in Australia)



# Connections

recommended, a 1200 baud is barely adequate and don't get 300 under any circumstances.

## ■ a printer

It does not need to be a dedicated printer, but it is convenient to have access to one.

There are no other hardware requirements. You do not need to have an automated library.

## Some issues which may need to be considered

Who will perform the searches - librarian, student or teacher?

Facilities in your school may have an influence on your decision. If, for example, you have only one stand-alone computer in the library workroom, it may not be practicable for students to perform their own searches. If, on the other hand, you have a well set-up computer lab with modem access, it may be a class activity.

Telecommunication and other charges may also be a factor. South Australian schools have been making extensive use of Presscom for a considerable time, because, as Presscom is located in Adelaide, telecommunications charges are minimal for them. It is a different matter for interstate schools.

If library staff are to perform the searches, how will this be prioritised in relation to other library duties? If library staff were to perform searches after 6.00pm or on weekends, to minimise telephone charges, would this be offset by flexible hours, additional salary or in some other way?

### *How will the use of on-line services be funded?*

Can the costs be shared by other faculty budgets? Should individual students be charged? If so, should it be on a full cost-recovery basis or should the school, library or faculty share in the costs.

What measures will be taken to secure passwords to ensure that there is no unauthorized access to the databases? The onus of protection of passwords is on the user. The Nexus Bulletin Board has a sophisticated account management system which allows multiple users in each school with an account limit for each. Other databases do not have this facility.

## Some tips to minimise costs (and hypertension)

It's quite daunting to dial up for the first time, knowing that the dollars are ticking away as you struggle to remember the correct commands to conduct your search. Full-text databases are much harder to search initially than bibliographic ones, because it's so easy to get lost in reams of print scrolling across the screen.

Read the documentation carefully before going on-line. Work out your search strategy ahead of time. Consult a thesaurus if there is one.

Turn screen capture on before you start. This ensures that everything that you do is downloaded to your computer for later leisurely perusal.

Do the searching when it is quiet and you won't be interrupted (before or after school if necessary), it will help you to be more relaxed.

When you encounter a problem or are not sure how to narrow the search more successfully, log off. Use the downloaded information to work out the solution, then log on again. In Presscom, it is possible to capture summaries of all the articles on a topic, log off, print them out, decide which ones are the most relevant, log on again and capture the full text of only those articles.

Make use of the hotline help which is available with many of the databases.

Check whether you are automatically logged off after a set period of inactivity (say, five minutes or so). If this is not the case and you accidentally terminate your session, make sure that you call up the service to ensure that you are logged off and are not clocking up a huge bill.

## Which databases to choose?

Databases which I have found useful are:

### SCIS

The SCIS database is one that is familiar to many teacher-librarians. As well as being used for cataloguing purposes, on-line searching of the database can also provide an invaluable tool for selection and collection-building. It allows a searching capability far superior

## Index

On-line services for school libraries	1
In this issue	1
How does information get on the SCIS Database?	5
National Catholic Education Commission	6
Primary School applications of CD-ROM	7
Cessation of CIN	7
How do I add a message to the bulletin board?	8



to the microfiche access for several reasons:

on-line searching provides access to new records as soon as they are added to the database, compared with microfiche monthly up-dates which may be weeks out of date;

it allows searching of the whole database at once, overcoming the tedium of searching first the annual cumulation and then the monthly update of microfiche;

it allows flexible searching via the most appropriate access point (mostly ISBN, title or subject). The subject approach is a useful selection tool. It is particularly helpful as a starting point for resourcing new curricula.

*Contact:*

Curriculum corporation  
PO Box 177  
Carlton South  
Victoria 3053  
Phone: (03) 639 0699,  
(008) 337 405

**AAP**

The AAP database is in fact comprised of three databases which contain 300,000 items of unedited news information from around the world. AAP90 has 102,000 items from June-December 1990, AAP91 has 186,000 stories from 1991 and AAP is the current year.

It can be accessed by schools via the NEXUS BBS operated by the Education Department of SA. Membership of Nexus is free (except for Telecom charges for interstate users) and it provides access to other educational bulletin board projects as well as E-Mail facility.

*Charges:*

- Nexus charges: 10 cents per minute
- Austpac costs 11 cents per minute (approx.)
- AAP charges: 2.5 cents (primary) 3 cent (secondary) per minute

There are also flat rate charges for schools with high use.

*Contact:*

Nexus co-ordinator  
Angle Park Computing Centre  
Cowan St  
Angle Park SA 5010  
Phone (08) 243 5559

**SAGE - Science and Geography Education**

This database, produced by the CSIRO, indexes over 600 articles from general science and geography journals. Many of the journals indexed are excellent yet inexpensive products of the CSIRO and are readily available in school libraries. It covers topics such as environment, earth science, astronomy and technology with an Australian emphasis.

Sage can be accessed via Nexus or Australis. The information on both of these services is updated in batches approximately once per month. This means that it is also a useful adjunct to the SAGE CD-ROM which is up-dated six-monthly.

**PRESSCOM**

This database contains the entire editorial context of the Murdoch newspapers of South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. Being a current newspaper database, it is up-dated daily. This is a fantastic resource for schools needing access to current newspaper articles. It is possible to search for a subject or combination of subjects, person or type of article (eg review, editorial, letter etc) or date. It is possible to narrow your search and then to preview the summary of articles before determining which are the most relevant. It is then possible to download the full-text of these articles to your own computer.

*Costs:* \$75.00 connection fee (once only)

\$15.00 minimum monthly

charge which allows 1.5 hours of searching, 0.17 per minute thereafter.

*Contact:*

PressCom Australia  
The Advertiser Newspapers  
GPO Box 339  
Adelaide 5001  
Phone: (08) 218 9559,  
(08) 218 9586

**SPORTSCAN**

While not an on-line service as such, SPORTSCAN, a subsidized service operated by the Australian Sports Commission, performs on-line searches for you. For a fee of \$10.00, Sportscan will perform a search on your sports related topic and, within two weeks, send a printout of citations. Full-text of articles are available for \$3.00 each from Sportscan.

*Contact::*

National Sport Information Centre  
Australian Sports Commission  
PO Box 176  
Belconnen  
ACT 2616  
Phone (06) 252 1369  
Fax (06) 252 1681

*Other on-line services which you may consider include:*

*This is part of an article written by Lance Deveson and Beverly Pianta which appeared in School Library News November 1991. Permission has been granted by Statewide School Support Centre in Victoria, to reproduce it here.*

**\*AUSTRALIS.**

An online information retrieval service provided by CSIRO. AUSTRALIS provides access to a growing collection of online databases containing factual, numerical, bibliographic and research in progress information. Some of the many databases available that may be of interest to schools include :



# Connections

FAMI - Australian Family and Society Abstracts; HERA - Heritage Australia; LEI - LEISURE : Australian Leisure Index; SAGE - Science and Geography Education (also available on CD-ROM). There is a choice of subscription rates available and there are no AUSTPAC or account maintenance costs.

Contact :  
CSIRO AUSTRALIS  
PO Box 89  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002  
Tel: (03) 418 7307  
FAX: (03) 419 0459

## **\*DISCOVERY.**

This is Telecom Australia's public videotex service, formerly known as Viatel. Databases on the system offer current news, weather reports, business and stock market information, and information from groups and bodies such as the Bureau of Census and Statistics, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Qantas, Sydney Hospital's Occupational Health and Safety Service, and Westpac. Discovery has several features which make it appropriate for use with students : it is easy to use; online charges are reasonable, and the system can be accessed from anywhere in Australia as a local call. Discovery can be used as a gateway to access other services such as AAP, Presscom and Australis.

Contact :  
Discovery  
GPO Box 188C  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001  
Tel: (03) 412 1666

## **\*CTC**

(Computer Telecommunications Corporation). Established primarily to meet the needs of schools. Databases available include current online versions of the Australian encyclopedia, the Macquarie dictionary, The academic American encyclopedia, and the ERIC

database for educators.

Contact :  
CTC  
11th Floor  
189 Kent Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

## **\*ELDERLINK.**

Aimed primarily at users involved in business and agriculture, but it also provides current news, weather, financial, educational, and general information. While more expensive than Discovery, it provides similar coverage in some fields, and is easy to use.

Contact:  
Elderlink  
27 Currie Street  
ADELAIDE SA 5000  
Tel (09) 218 4611

## **\*DIALOG.**

Based in California, the DIALOG utility offers more than 250 different databases, including ERIC. Enviroline, Energyline, The Academic American Encyclopedia, Facts on File, and the Associated Press news service. Special cheap rates are available to schools and tertiary institutions through the "DIALOG Classroom Instruction Program", while the "DIALOG Classmate" service, designed to provide an easy search environment for primary and secondary school use, is available for US\$15 per connect hour plus telephone charges. The cost of the telephone charges is reduced significantly if schools use the OT Data Access service to link with DIALOG.

Contact:  
DIALOG Information Services  
Insearch Ltd  
Box K16  
Haymarket  
SYDNEY NSW 2007  
Tel : (02) 212 2867

## **\*PERGAMON ORBIT INFOLINE.**

Like DIALOG, this international service is based in the United States. It offers around sixty

databases. A few Australian schools have taken advantage of its special rate for classroom use.

Contact :  
ORBIT Search Service  
PO Box 544  
POTTS POINT NSW 2011

## **\*AUSINET.**

The Ausinet service, provided by Ferntree Computer Services, makes available a large range of Australian databases, including Australian Education Index, Streamline (a water resources database), Australian Financial Review, and Edline. While there is currently no special rate for schools, AUSINET does offer information which would be difficult to locate in any other way.

Contact:  
AUSINET  
Ferntree Computer Services  
310 Ferntree Gully Road  
CLAYTON VIC 3168  
Tel: (03) 541 5600

## **\*KEYLINK.**

This is a Telecom electronic mail and bulletin board service. As well as users being able to leave electronic mail messages there are electronic bulletin boards with information about curriculum projects, for example, Readshare - a current project which invites teachers and children to share their responses to literature. There is also a writers' online facility whereby students can correspond with Australian authors. KEYLINK can also be used as a gateway to data bases such as the AAP database, and Presscom.

Contact for initial enquiries :  
Teri Ellram,  
Computer Consultant  
Pahran School Support Centre  
EAST ST KILDA VIC 3183  
Tel: (03) 520 7666

## **\*OZLINE.**

This is a network of bibliographic databases including ANB (Australia



# HOW DOES THE INFORMATION GET ONTO THE SCIS DATABASE?

**H**ave you ever wondered how the records magically materialise onto the SCIS database? There are actually nine cataloguing agencies throughout Australia inputting data. Agencies currently exist in South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, ACT, Victoria, Tasmania and the National Catholic Education Commission. Each agency with the exception of the NCEC is funded by its State Education Ministry. Agencies receive a credit for items added to the SCIS database.

The agencies operate differently and provide different services to schools. Here are some examples:

## **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

The Cataloguing Section of Curriculum Materials Information Services provides a free original cataloguing and records distribution service to all Western Australian government schools. This is compatible with the school staffing situation where schools are not expected to undertake cataloguing functions themselves. School staffing and funding reflect this policy.

The central team catalogues any item required by a school, provided it fits within cataloguing policy guidelines.

Even if only one school requires the item it is more effective for a professional to create a quality record than for a non professional to spend time creating a record of lower quality for student use.

The records created in WA are stored on the Ministry's mainframe which uses DOBIS LIBIS software. On a fortnightly basis new records are transmitted on tape to the Curriculum Corporation. There a duplicate checking program ensures that only new items are loaded onto the SCIS database from the WA tape. This is a reciprocal arrangement with WA receiving a SCIS update tape each fortnight.

Government schools order from the Ministry using an order form which cites the ISBN and title. Additional information is required for items without ISBNs. Central staff search the database and if the requested catalogue record is on the database a set of catalogue products or a machine readable record on diskette is produced. The set of catalogue products contains a complete set of cards for a dictionary catalogue or a simplified set of shelf list, title and series cards. The type of card set provided varies according to the level of professional staff in the school. All card sets are accompanied by prepared spine labels, loan card label and book pocket label.

If the requested title is not on the database, the school is

invited to send in the item for the creation of a new catalogue record.

Priorities are for new school acquisitions and the maximum turnaround time for product requests is less than 10 working days. In 1991 the WA team created approximately 18 500 catalogue records which were transmitted to the SCIS database.

## **SCIS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

The Northern Territory Library Service (NTLS) provides centralised access to SCIS for schools throughout the Northern Territory. All schools which participate in the Northern Territory government mainframe Unisys system (CBASS) have online access to SCIS. This includes high schools with a Search only facility and primary schools with the Search and Product Ordering facilities - a total of 55 schools in all.

All costs incurred by the schools including subscriptions, line lease, terminal connect fees and products are met centrally by NTLS.

A centralised cataloguing service is provided by the Technical Services section within NTLS. The Senior Cataloguer has been responsible for all SCIS cataloguing. The creation of six hundred records a year has been the accepted



target however this goal has not been achieved during the past twelve months due to factors such as staff shortages.

The two sources for materials to be catalogued onto SCIS are the primary schools themselves and curriculum materials produced by the Northern Territory Department of Education. The accepted practice for the collection of these materials is for them to be sent into NTLS as they are identified by the schools or as they are released for publication. The turnaround time again depends very much on the availability of cataloguing staff. Ideally it should not be more than 2-3 weeks.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

The NSW Department of School Education will maintain its involvement in SCIS following a State Government decision to approve funding for this purpose. Recent restructuring of the Department of School Education will ensure that the team of five cataloguers will achieve an annual target of 6,000 new bibliographic records. A panel of teachers and teacher-librarians from schools

throughout the state is being co-ordinated by the SCIS Review Coordinator to ensure that a target of 750 reviews of learning materials is also contributed to the database annually.

Materials for cataloguing and review are being solicited from publishers. A small number of schools with online access to SCIS have been invited to assist in the location of relevant new materials, not on the database, by sending them directly to the Cataloguing and Review team. Such materials are returned to schools within three weeks. From time to time materials which support curriculum priority areas in NSW will be purchased for review.

The NSW cataloguing team will give priority to materials which support curriculum implementation in NSW. In 1992 particular emphasis is being given to the support of the following Board of Studies syllabuses:

- Aboriginal Studies 11-12
- Design and Technology 7-10
- English K-6
- Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-10
- Science and Technology K-6

## NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

Since October 1990 the National Catholic Education Commission has employed a cataloguer to catalogue religious education (RE) materials for entry to the SCIS database. In the first year of operation, 1,000 records were added to the SCIS database.

Any Catholic school or institution within Australia is able to make direct use of the agency. Schools and institutions are encouraged to send RE items, after making an appointment, to the NCEC cataloguer for entry onto the SCIS database. All material added is on loan from schools and institutions and published later than 1982. A three or four week turnaround time is anticipated.■

## VICTORIA

In October 1984 Victorian cataloguers added some of the first records to the then ASCIS database. Several of the same cataloguers are still involved, giving the Victorian Statewide School Support Centre a sense of history, background and consistency. The cataloguing staff has gradually declined from the original nine to the current three full-time cataloguers.

The Statewide School Support Centre has a commitment to add 6,000 new records each year. About 60% of this material is obtained directly from schools. All schools are encouraged to submit items not on the database for cataloguing. Schools must ring to make an appointment with the cataloguers and can then arrange to have material collected or sent for cataloguing. Schools that take advantage of this service receive free cataloguing records. Resources are catalogued in order of receipt with a six to eight week turnaround time. The remaining 40% of material is obtained directly from publishers (book and non-book) and/or educational booksellers.

Statewide School Support Centre caters for all schools in Victoria including independent and Catholic (except for religious education material) as well as Ministry of Education. The cataloguers, as well as providing general cataloguing expertise, can also cope with a range of languages other than English including French, German, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew and some community languages.■



## PRIMARY SCHOOL APPLICATIONS OF CD-ROM.

Andrew Perry, well-known as the editor of *Access*, is the teacher-librarian at Vermont Primary School in Victoria. The school was named this year as an Apple Technology Site.

To support the curriculum initiatives taking place at the school, a computerised information network (Infonet) has been developed which links twelve Macintosh computers, printers, a modem and CD-ROM player via cabling, to a central file server. This provides access from classrooms, library and staff room to a variety of

resources including the library catalogue, the CD-ROM discs, wordprocessing, desktop publishing and other software.

Andrew has been using CD-ROM technology for about two years. It is formally introduced to students at Grade 2 level as one resource for locating and extracting information. The Grolier encyclopedia is popularly used by these young students who locate information using the title and picture search facilities. By Grade 6 students can use the keyboard search facilities and some are beginning to develop strategies to narrow their searches.

Students can access the CD-ROM either from their classrooms or the library. Classroom access is facilitated by the use of E-Mail messaging on the Infonet system. The

classroom teacher can send a message via the computer to request access to a particular CD-ROM disc. The discs are all housed centrally, in the library. Once the message is received, the requested disc is placed in the CD-ROM player. Students can also access the CD-ROM informally during lunch-time and recess in the library.

CD-ROM discs currently used at Vermont include the Grolier encyclopedia, *Avalanche*, *CIA* world fact book, *Guinness* disc of records, *Explore* and *Whole Earth Catalog*. The biggest problem that Andrew perceives is that there are not enough CD-ROMs suitable for primary students. There is a real need for discs with Australian content and coverage of topics such as insects, dinosaurs, mammals, an atlas and Australian history. ■

## Cessation of CIN

The Australian Curriculum Information Network and its related subsets (Australian Studies, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Environmental Studies, National Curriculum Software Review and Asian Studies) will cease operation as from 30 June next.

ACIN has had a short and somewhat uncertain history. The original concept was introduced by the former Curriculum Development Centre in Canberra in the late 1970's. The C.D.C. attempted to provide a mechanism for identifying, capturing and sharing, exemplary teaching and learning practices among systems and schools. ACIN was deliberately conceived as a network with no centralised collections of materials and no systematic accessing of the data. It intended to put teachers and curriculum workers in touch with each other across the nation. That vision has only partially been realised and the challenge remains. ACIN subsequently become absorbed into the newly formed Curriculum Corporation. The sub-sets were added on the representations of specific interest groups and state agencies contributed to, and accessed, the database for specific purposes.

The decision to terminate CIN was taken as a consequence of diminishing returns from

subscriptions and a consequent recurring loss that could not be sustained by the Corporation in current economic circumstances.

The potential for a national curriculum information database remains. The necessity of a national database to support national curriculum activity has been demonstrated in the U.K. through the agency of the National Education Resource Information Service (N.E.R.I.S.). A similar Australian system would require a highly flexible and friendly software platform and realistic funding arrangements. Perhaps more importantly it will require a change in teacher culture. Teachers generally are only beginning to realise the value and effectiveness of obtaining information electronically when undertaking their daily curriculum and lesson planning activities.

Perhaps it may be possible to revisit the ACIN concept when more propitious circumstances prevail.

If there are unresolved issues or difficulties that arise from the termination decision the Corporation should be contacted.

Warren Brewer  
*Curriculum & Information Manager*  
*Curriculum Corporation*



## HOW DO I ADD A MESSAGE TO THE BULLETIN BOARD?

ALL DIAL-UP users now have access to the Bulletin Board and Mail facilities on the SCIS Database.

They differ in their use in that Bulletin Board gives a User the opportunity to leave a message on the System for ALL users to read i.e. Something to sell or In need of some information.

Mail allows a user to send a Message just to another individual user on the system. The message is not for public broadcast.

Curriculum Corporation can also leave messages for ALL users on both Bulletin Board and Mail.

### Using Bulletin Board:

From the Main Menu select Option 4.

(This gives access to the summary of existing Bulletin Board Messages.)

Select "a" and enter to add a message (this gives a clear screen)

Type in your Message.

(Remember to use the TAB key

to move to next line not the Enter Key)

At the bottom of the screen you have two options

? Quit ? Send

TAB down and across to ? Send and replace the ? with any key [Enter]

This places your message onto the Bulletin Board.

### TO REMOVE the MESSAGE.

Access the Bulletin Board from the Main Menu.

Select your own Message

The screen now has the extra Option of "? Delete".

TAB down and access to ?

Delete, replace the ? with any key and enter.

The message is now removed.

### Using Mail:

From the Main Menu Select Option 5 for MAIL.

From the Summary Screen select "a" to add a Message.

Again remember to use TAB to move to the next line.

When the message is complete TAB down and across to ? Send

Replace the ? with any Key [Enter]

This gives a clear Screen and the prompt "Enter Search Term" Type in the Users Signon here that you wish to send the Mail [Enter]

A screen appears with 14 user signons displayed. The number keyed in should be in the second position.

Select the number [Enter]

The message is now sent to the User.

The screen again clears and the prompt

Enter Search term is displayed

To finish the session type /e/e/e

This takes you back to the Main Menu

### To REMOVE the MAIL

Use the same procedure as with Bulletin Board as above.

### Signons:

Curriculum Corporation is preparing a List of User Signons and Names to be forwarded to each existing Dial-Up User so they can then send Mail to other users.■

*continued from page 4*

National Bibliography), managed by the OZLINE Subsection of the National Library. The subject content of th various databases is Australian in emphasis and covers the disciplines of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Source materials for the eleven databases currently on OZLINE are mainly periodical and newspaper articles as well as articles from scholarly journals, conference papers and monographs. There are special

rates for schools to access particular databases. Access is via Austpac, Telecom's packet switching telecommunications service, but becoming an individual subscriber is not required, as the National Library has negotiated automatic membership of Austpac for all OZLINE users.

### Contact:

OZLINE Section  
National Library of Australia  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Tel: (06) 262 1536; (008) 02 0002

Note: The Australian Database Development Association has produced a Directory of Australian Databases.

### References

Australian Database Development Association. Directory of Australian Databases, (2nd ed.). Melbourne: Australian Database Development Association, 1986.

Acknowledgement : Research undertaken by Lance Deveson, Curriculum Corporation.