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CAUL Database Services

The Council of Australian University Librarians has used part of a grant from the Department of Employment, Education and Training to initiate a trial of direct desktop searching by Australian academic staff of two United States electronic information services via Aarnet. They are OCLC First Search and the Citadel service from the Research Libraries Group

Only selected files from Citadel are available for the period of the trial, 1 November 1994 to 30 April 1995. Unfortunately the trial databases do not include any legal indexes, although two legal indexes are offered on Citadel, *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* and *World Law Index*, part one. The latter indexes legislation of Hispanic language countries and is intended eventually to index the legislation of all civil law countries.

Files which academic law librarians may find useful during the trial include the BIB file (the RLG union catalogue), Dissertations Abstracts and Inside Information (the British Library's table-of-contents service).

The BIB file contains the catalogue records of many of the largest US academic law libraries and will be useful for all forms of bibliographic verification and for interlibrary loan. Inside Information provides table-of-contents information for 10,000 of the most requested titles in the British Library Document Supply Centre's collection of 50,000 journals.

RLG has very recently added a new file to Citadel which should interest law librarians; this is US Government Periodicals Index. It is prepared by the Congressional Information Service and covers

175 key journals published by the United States government. It will be updated quarterly. If you wish to obtain more information about this file and others not available in the CAUL trial you can contact Gregory Whitfield of the Research Libraries Group over the Internet at:

blgrw@rlg.stanford.edu

OCLC's First Search provides access to a wider range of indexing databases than Citadel. The CAUL service subsidizes the university libraries to buy blocks of searches for use by academic staff, which in effect constitutes a type of rationing. The off-setting advantage of block search purchases is that libraries can give their patrons access to low-use databases which do not justify an annual subscription to a CD-ROM and the associated support costs.

Law or law-related databases available through First Search include *Index to Legal Periodicals* and *PAIS-Public Affairs Information Service*. Other indexes potentially useful to law library patrons include *Periodical Abstracts*, *Readers Guide Abstracts* (particularly good for its indexing of the US public affairs journals such as *Harpers*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *New Republic* and *Nation*) and business files such as *ABI-Inform*, *Business Periodicals Index* and *Wilson Business Abstracts*.

First Search also offers two table-of-contents services, ArticleFirst and ContentsFirst. There is now a plethora of table-of-contents services offered across the Internet. The leader in the field, CARL Uncover still continues to offer its service free. The other services will have to be very comprehensive in order to attract customers prepared to pay. It will be most interesting to see which of them offers the widest range and most up-to-date contents of law journals.

The biggest attraction of First Search for many librarians, particularly technical services and inter-

library loans librarians, will continue to be World Cat, the giant OCLC union catalogue of more than 27 million records from over 15,000 libraries worldwide

BBC World Service

The BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts, published for over 50 years, is now to be offered over the Internet through a closed user group utilizing the File Transfer Protocol. This new service has been designed to allow users to build their own databases, in effect a do-it-yourself selective dissemination of information facility.

Summary of World Broadcasts is also available through conventional online services such as Reuters Textline, Data Star and Nexis. To obtain further information contact:

Marian Martin

Marketing Executive

BBC Monitoring

Caversham Park

Reading RG4 6BZ United Kingdom

Fax: 44 734 463823 Tel: 44 734 469215

SCALE and AGPS

ALLG members may not be aware of the progress made by the Access to Commonwealth Law project located within the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. In 1994 the Attorney-General (Hon Michael Lavarch MP) announced a plan to improve access to Commonwealth legislation for Australians. The Attorney-General saw this as involving at least three aspects: first, the consolidation and maintenance of all current Commonwealth Acts and Statutory Rules in electronic form; secondly, the provision of publicly available access points; and thirdly, the use of SCALE as the delivery mechanism for the electronic form of the legislation. To those ends, it can now be reported that *all* Commonwealth legislation has been brought up-to-date and that it is being kept in that state (with about 20 days from the coming into

effect of an amendment to seeing it 'republished' in a new consolidation) and that the first of a planned range of public access points - using the nine AGPS Bookshops - has been put in place. The Attorney-General launched the availability of the service from the Brisbane AGPS Bookshop on 20 July, remarking "that this [was] the first time that up-to-date consolidated Commonwealth legislation has been so readily available to the public."

Accordingly, members of the public may now use SCALE terminals and printers to browse SCALE databases (not only the statutory examples) at no charge and may print out up to 30 pages of material free. A print of more than 30 pages will incur a nominal charge.

While this may be of some value to ALLG members the project to revamp SCALE may be more interesting. A significant part of the Access to Commonwealth Legislation project has been the Commonwealth's letting of a tender to supply a text retrieval system (hardware, software and services). This will provide both a modern version of the existing SCALE (it is hoped that it will be, to over-use the cliché, 'state-of-the-art') and the infrastructure required for the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments which Richard Griffiths described in *Australian Law Librarian* (2:4, August 1994 at p 220). A major reason for the redevelopment of SCALE was to provide a system which will be easy enough for untrained members of the public to use effectively. This will become of increasing importance as the number and variety of access points (to place such as libraries, schools and law bookshops) increases.

SCALE (old and new) will still be available on a subscription basis for those who want access to it from the comfort of their own workstations rather than brave the elements and AGPS Bookshops. It is expected that it will be increasingly available at either marginal or no cost (for example, law schools and legal aid offices are now able to use it free) as the Attorney-General's vision for access to the law takes effect.

David Grainger

Director, SCALE