

ONLINE AND ONDISC

Christine Maher

Column Co-ordinator

Electronic Information Services Librarian

La Trobe University Library

Ph: (03) 9479 1922

Fax: (03) 9471 0993

Email: c.maher@latrobe.edu.au

ONLINE SERVICES

New look AUSINET

The Fairfax Group's purchase of AUSINET has led to a complete renovation of the search interface, the contents of the service and the pricing structure.

The new search interface, in keeping with an apparently unstoppable trend, is graphical, (ie Windows based), and far more sophisticated and powerful but also easier to use than the old command line searching. It incorporates natural language searching and cross-database searching as well as the usual boolean facilities. Frequently used databases may be grouped and saved for faster access and search strategies may be saved for future re-use.

The Windows interface means that saving, cutting and pasting into other applications are all far easier than they used to be with the old command line front end. The new search interface provides many more immediately visible search cues and should markedly reduce the need for consultation of the manual, which nevertheless, is well designed and easy to use.

Again in keeping with common trends in the online/library database world, AUSINET now provides access to a very impressive range of full text resources, including *Asia Intelligence Wire*, an interesting collection of English-language world newspapers, newswires and business journals with a major Asian focus from Chamber World Network of New York. Newspapers in full text include *China Daily*, *Mainichi Daily News*, the *Jakarta Post*, *The Hindu*, *The Statesman*, *The Korea Herald*, *Singapore Straits Times*, the *New Straits Times (Malaysia)*, the *South China Morning Post* and the *Vietnam Courier*. Most, but not all, of the business journals are also concerned with Asia.

The Australian newspaper content has expanded and is intended to expand further. As well as the Fairfax newspapers, *The Age*, *Sunday Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Australian Financial Review*, the *West Australian*, *Kalgoorlie Miner* and the *Sydney Sun Herald* are also now part of the service.

The FI Profile service is continued from the old AUSINET but not all of the previous abstracting and indexing databases. Of the latter, Accounting and Taxation Database, Australasian Business Index and EDGE (formerly LISARD) are the sole Australian database survivors.

Various new indexing databases are mainly Japanese such as *Comline Electronics Japan*, *Comline Japan Chemical Week* but also *Chemical Business Newsbase*.

AUSINET continues to offer access to the Australian Securities Commission National Corporate Database. ASC customers who access through the AUSINET connection do not have to use the new GUI interface in order to continue to access the ASC.

The pricing strategy makes the AUSINET service very competitive with Nexis in the area of Asia-Pacific information, at least for all libraries which do not qualify for the Nexis education discounts. Subscribers have the option of setting up an account with ILANET and paying a \$3.70 a minute all-up fee for casual searching as required, or of participating in a specified level of commitment by number of hours through a direct subscription arrangement with AUSINET. Searching AUSINET through ILANET requires a \$45.00 per month ILANET account fee.

The commitment form of subscription can be as low as one hour per month for a one month commitment at a cost of \$222.00 or for heavy users, 35 hours per month for 12 months at a cost of \$18000.00. The per minute charge cost of these two plans works out at \$3.70 per minute and \$0.71 per minute. There is a large sliding scale of commitment plans between these two extremes which allows for a considerable range of search requirements, but clearly favours heavy users over casual users.

Under consideration for the future is access through the World Wide Web. This may have implications for the pricing structure which will enhance the service's appeal for the casual user.

For further information or to arrange a demonstration or subscription contact:

Shannon Trueman

Account Manager
AUSINET Pty Ltd
441 St Kilda Road
Melbourne Vic 3004
Ph: (03) 9829 9989
Fax: (03) 9867 5559

or

Nigel Royfee

Business Manager
AUSINET PTY LTD
GPO Box 506
Sydney NSW 2001
Ph: (02) 299 4800
Fax: (02) 299 4507

ON THE NET

Interesting new initiatives for legal research include, from the United States, *Full-text State Statutes and Legislation on the Internet* and *Meta-Index for US Legal Research* provided by the Georgia State University College of Law, and from Great Britain comes the *Social Sciences Information Gateway* (SOSIG) subject catalogue of British and world-wide law resources

Full-text state statutes and legislation on the Internet is a service which contains links to full-text US state constitutions, statutes, legislation and session laws on the Internet. Material is available for 40 states of the US, but there is considerable variation in the amount of content for each state. See bottom of column for the URL.

Meta-index for US legal research shows how WEB information providers are starting to make full use of the potentiality of search engines to improve ease and precision of access to WEB resources. Search engines are provided to enable retrieval from a wide range of US primary legal materials such as Federal Judicial Opinions and the US Code, as well as retrieval from secondary source sites such as Findlaw and the Legal Domain Network which archives many law-related USENET newsgroups. See end of column for the URL.

SOSIG is a WEB Gateway project sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain. Its strengths are the high quality of the design and uniformity of presentation of the Gateway resources and the fact that it includes all types of resources in its subject listings, eg mailing lists, electronic journals, bibliographies, University Department offerings, professional organisation sites etc

SOSIG indexes subject resources in law, economics, business, sociology and anthropology, social work and social policy. For each subject listing there is a separate gateway to British resources and to world resources. All those who have found it difficult to find British WEB resources can now relax, as SOSIG makes it very easy

I found the SOSIG *What's New* button to be a very good way of keeping up with worthwhile new Social Science resources on the WEB. Although the British are relative latecomers to the World Wide Web, SOSIG and other subject gateways such as OMNI the biomedical equivalent of SOSIG, which have been developed through the auspices of British research organisations, are showing the way in providing easy access to high quality WEB resources both within Britain and across the world

Lexis-Nexis. How Do You Keep Up To Date ?

Many Australian librarians have discovered that there is no reliable and easy method for keeping up-to-date with new files and new publications, particularly Australian ones, as they are added to the Lexis-Nexis service. Contributors to the ANZ Law Librarians List are making heroic efforts to pass on their discoveries to their fellow list subscribers

The Lexis-Nexis WEB site includes a Customer Communications Page (see below for URL) which provides an Indexed Directory of Online Services and an Alphabetical List of Online Sources as well as a fax bulletin archive and various newsletters, including an Information Professional Update

Unfortunately, none of these resources seems to provide sufficient detail to check easily for individual materials. The *What's New* button seems to concentrate on new North American publications or files, but also requires users to check regularly to keep up

The Indexed Directory's listing of the Australia Library materials, for instance, lists AGIS under the heading Law Journals, but does not list the individual Butterworth journals (as of 21 August). Similarly, the News Sources Listing in the Australia Library only lists files containing information about Australia, but does not enable users to check on the state of the on-again off-again Fairfax newspapers

Washburn University Law Library operates the Lexis-User-L discussion list for Lexis users, but this does not seem an appropriate vehicle for conveying news about file contents.

I asked Eva Au, the Lexis-Nexis Asia Pacific Manager, to respond to my suggestion for establishing an email news distribution list which would automatically forward all news of major new contents or removal of important sources to subscribers to Lexis-Nexis. This would be purely a distribution list, not a discussion list, but would seem to me much less cumbersome than the FAX Bulletin approach

Ms Au has forwarded my suggestion to the Lexis-Nexis International Marketing Department and to Ann Sutherland at Butterworths in Sydney, but it may require concerted action from Australian librarians to provide sufficient pressure to get such a list established

Obviously, it would be impractical for such a list to forward news of every single new item, but it should not be beyond the capabilities of Lexis-Nexis to send selective news to selected groups of customers, e.g. Australian materials notifications to Australian librarians.

List of URLs

Full Text State Statutes and Legislation on the Internet:
<http://www.prairienet.org/~scruffy/f.htm>

Meta-Index for U.S. Legal Research
<http://gsulaw.gsu.edu/metaindex/>

SOSIG Home Page :
<http://sosig.esrc.bris.ac.uk/Welcome.html>

SOSIG UK Law Resources :
<http://sosig.esrc.bris.ac.uk/Subjects/UK/law.html>

OMNI :
<http://www.omni.ac.uk/>

URL for Lexis-Nexis Customer Communications Page is :
<http://www.lexisnexis.com/lnc/sources.html>