

ONLINE SEARCHING

A DICTIONARY and BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDE

GREG BYERLY

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GREG BYERLY

LIBRARIES UNLIMITED, INC.
Littleton, Colorado
1983

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INTRODUCTION

Online searching is rapidly becoming an integral part of reference service in many libraries. More and more professional librarians are actively involved in either conducting searches or using the results of such searches to provide information to patrons. It is, furthermore, increasingly difficult to read an article in a professional journal about reference work without being exposed to online searching concepts and terminology. Both librarians and library administrators need basic information to guide them in setting up and managing an online search service. In a similar fashion, online search analysts also find it increasingly difficult to keep up with the tremendous number of articles published on search techniques and strategies.

This dictionary and bibliographic guide to online searching provides easy access to concise and understandable definitions of online searching terminology and also presents a selective annotated bibliography of journal articles, arranged by specific topics, which are readily accessible to most librarians. In addition, representative books, directories, bibliographies, annuals and proceedings, and journals are identified.

This work is not designed to deal with the entire spectrum of library automation or information retrieval, but only with online searching. Online searching is further restricted to those computerized applications commonly available from the three major commercial search services (Bibliographic Retrieval Service [BRS], DIALOG Information Retrieval Service [DIALOG], and System Development Corporation [SDC]). Other applications (e.g., electronic mail) and other systems (e.g., National Library of Medicine's MEDLARS) are briefly covered both in the dictionary section and the bibliography, but emphasis is on online searching as exemplified by the three general search services.

Over 1,200 terms are included in the dictionary section. Definitions are purposely short and concise. As in any dictionary, the intent is not to explain in detail, but simply to identify basic meanings and to indicate through cross-references how a specific word is related to other terms. The main criterion used in selecting a term was whether it is used in the field of online searching. This is not a dictionary of computer science or library automation. Computer terminology is kept to a minimum and identified as "COMPUTER SCIENCE USAGE." The majority of the terms included deal directly with online searching. Examples are given where appropriate, and many "see" and "see also" references are included.

In addition, certain terms are typed in **boldface** to indicate that that term is defined in the dictionary and to suggest that it might also be consulted. However, some terms (e.g., "online" and "computer") are used so frequently that they are

boldfaced only when a basic comprehension of the term is essential to understanding the definition in which it is used. As a general rule, acronyms and names of databases are capitalized.

System specific terms for BRS, DIALOG, and SDC are also defined. Over 150 such definitions, representing system commands, messages, abbreviations, and other unique terms, are included and noted as "BRS USAGE," "DIALOG USAGE," and "SDC USAGE." In a similar fashion, over 200 databases available from these three commercial search services and the MEDLARS files are identified. These databases and their file names are listed not as a directory of available databases, but simply as an easy means to identify databases commonly referred to in the articles included in the bibliography. For each database the general subject coverage is summarized, its availability is noted, and the file name or number is given, e.g., "Available on BRS (CAIN file), DIALOG (Files 10 and 110), and SDC (AGRICOLA file)." Common online messages from the communications networks are also included, e.g., "TYMNET USAGE" or "TELENET USAGE."

The bibliography section consists primarily of annotated journal articles, although significant books, directories, bibliographies, journals, annuals, and proceedings are also identified and briefly annotated in "Sources of Additional Information." Material beyond the scope of this bibliography includes: individual papers presented at conferences and meetings; ERIC documents; user manuals and other publications of commercial search services and database producers; search aids, including thesauri, and user manuals in general; and newsletters and other non-journal serial publications.

The 722 annotated journal articles in the bibliography are grouped into two major divisions. Part I has 32 subdivisions which provide a general overview of online searching and are designed to aid in the establishment of an online search service. Topics range from the "Design and Theory of Online Searching" to "User Evaluation and Attitudes." Part II includes articles for the experienced searcher, detailing how to perform searches in specific subject areas. Ten general subject areas and their representative databases are also included.

The annotations are descriptive, not critical, in nature. However, over 1,200 articles were specifically considered for inclusion and all of those included are judged to be of particular value. An extensive subject index is provided, as well as a periodicals cited index and an author index. In general, only items published since 1970 were selected. Coverage includes items available as of June 1982. Articles also had to be in English and, in part I, all were from readily accessible journals. Certain exceptions were made in part II (Specialized Subject Areas and Databases) and some items from more specialized journals or journals in a particular discipline were included.

Articles were selected from a wide variety of journals, but certain journals were extensively covered. All articles from *Database*, *Online*, and *Online Review* were included. A *de visu* examination of an additional 17 journals (noted with an asterisk in the Periodicals Cited Index) was conducted for the period January 1970 through June 1982 and relevant items selected and annotated. Entries from 49 other journals were retrieved through both manual and online searches of appropriate indexes and databases.

Each section of this book can be used to complement the other. For example, online terminology or databases mentioned in the article abstracts are defined and identified in the dictionary section. Similarly, persons using the dictionary to identify an unfamiliar database can also use the subject index to discover

additional journal articles which deal with that database. This book should provide librarians, library administrators, online searchers, library students, and other interested laypersons with a concise guide to the terminology of online searching and easy access to the research in the field.