

gration of innovative and traditional research methods.

## REFERENCES

1. For a fuller discussion of the resistance of many humanities scholars to computer-assisted research and an interesting (though controversial) consideration of some psychological dimensions of this issue, see Scott D. Stebelman, "On-Line Searching and the Humanities: Relevance, Resistance, and Marketing Strategies," in Martha E. Williams and Thomas H. Hogan, comp., *National Online Meeting Proceedings—1981, New York, March 24–26, 1981* (Medford, N.J.: Learned Information, Inc., 1981), p.443–53.
2. This is not to suggest that these databases cannot be searched by historical period. Joyce Duncan Falk describes and illustrates this technique in "Searching By Historical Period in the History Databases," *National Online Meeting* p.199–205.

## A SAMPLER OF DATABASES FOR SEARCHES IN HISTORY

*The reviews and commentary were prepared by RASD History Section Bibliography and Indexes Committee members Paul Mogren (chair), Gretchen Lake, Nat Josel, Steven Zink, and Ted Sheldon, and by Ann Marie Breznay, with additional data and editing by Joyce Duncan Falk.*

To review successfully the databases appropriate for historical research, some practical application is necessary. The following reviews of eight bibliographic databases emphasize their usefulness as practical research aids for topics in history. The comments are on only a selected number of the databases for history searching; additional ones are listed at the end of the reviews. The sample searches were conducted in files on the DIALOG Information Retrieval Service because all the authors were familiar with that system and all had access to it.

For each database subject coverage, in-

dexing, currency of information, and type of source documents are considered. The primary questions are, How useful is each database for historical research? and, How are databases not specifically covering the discipline of history useful for historians? Members of the Reference and Adult Services Division, History Section, Bibliography and Indexes Committee reviewed the databases using topics of their own choosing and looked at the effectiveness of the databases from the point of view of both a librarian and a historian. Each database was also tested to find information on the same topic to evaluate the databases from a common ground. The topic used for the test was the history of U.S. government land use, which should retrieve historical information on land use, current information relating to the Sagebrush Rebellion, and historical and current material on the international scope of the issue.

The search terms used in the test searches were land use, national parks, national forests, parks, forests, reserves, land reservation, conservation, and preservation. These terms were used uniformly in each database tested.

*America: History and Life (AHL) 1964– (DIALOG:38)*

Subject: History and culture of the United States and Canada; prehistory to the present.

Source Documents: Articles from 2,000 journals in history, social sciences, and humanities, and from selected collections, 1964– ; books and dissertations, 1974–

The database corresponds to the printed index of the same name, covers American history and culture from prehistory to the present, includes abstracts and annotations of articles, and lists dissertations and books with book-review data. Searching is possible by using free text terms, subject index descriptors, historical periods, or all three. A free text search was very successful, especially in retrieving relevant journal article citations not exclusively historical in scope. The database and the printed index both have a time lag of about nine months from the appearance of the article to the publication of the citation in the index. Although the database corresponds to the printed version, a search of the online

database is more productive than a manual search because of the free text searching capability.

*Comprehensive Dissertation Index (CDI)* 1861- (DIALOG:35; BRS:DISS)

Subject: All subjects.

Source Documents: 99 percent of the dissertations accepted at U.S.-accredited institutions since 1861; selected masters theses since 1962.

This database provides access only by title, author, and institution, and only bibliographic information is given — there are no abstracts or subject index terms — yet because of the informative nature of most (not all) dissertation titles, keyword or phrase searching can be successful in retrieving dissertations from many disciplines relating to the historical topic of land use. *CDI* covers doctoral dissertations from American, Canadian, and some foreign universities in all subject areas, as well as some masters theses. The most important advantage of this database for historians is that relevant dissertations in all subject fields can be retrieved simultaneously, though searches can be limited to specific disciplines and subdisciplines within both the machine-readable and the print versions of the index.

*ERIC* 1966- (DIALOG:1; BRS:ERIC; SDC:ERIC)

Subject: Education.

Source Documents: Articles from more than 700 periodicals, education research reports, bibliographies, course descriptions, theses, curriculum guides.

*ERIC*, although primarily a system for use by educators, actually covers virtually every academic field in regard to teaching methods. This is especially true in history because the histories of many disciplines are widely taught. The possibility of free text searching as well as the availability of the new *ERIC* thesaurus aid in searching. This database includes types of source documents not usually listed in other databases, such as U.S. and foreign documents, bibliographies, speeches and addresses, unpublished materials, directories, guides, and handbooks. *ERIC* includes few scholarly research articles in history, but the usefulness of the database is enhanced by the availability of the docu-

ments through the many ERIC depository collections in the country and the existence of the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Historians should try ERIC because, based on the test run, it did provide a surprising number of documents on a historical topic.

*Historical Abstracts (HA)* 1973- (DIALOG:39)

Subject: World history, broadly defined (except U.S. and Canada), 1450 to the present.

Source Documents: Articles from 2,000 journals in history, social sciences, and humanities; 1973-80.

*HA* corresponds to the printed index, which covers world history of the modern era, excluding the United States and Canada, which are covered in *AHL*. Though a topic in American history was used for this sample search, *HA* produced a large number of articles that discussed the worldwide implications of the topic. Because *HA* covers journals published worldwide, foreign-language articles were retrieved, but English translations of the titles and annotations in English are provided. Types of materials included are primarily journal articles, but there are also conference proceedings, collections of essays, and festschriften; beginning in 1980, books and dissertations are also listed.

*Magazine Index* 1977- (DIALOG:47)

Subject: All subjects.

Source Documents: Articles from general magazines.

Periodicals selected for coverage specifically in history are few in number but include *The American Historical Review*, *History Today*, *American Heritage*, and some magazines devoted to particular cities, e.g., New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco. Because the scope of *Magazine Index* is general, information in it is also general. More inclusive than *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, *Magazine Index* concentrates on large-circulation popular magazines. The database is not very useful for scholarly research unless the topic is contemporary culture.

*The Philosopher's Index* 1940- (DIALOG:57)

Subject: Philosophy and related in-

terdisciplinary fields, philosophy of various disciplines.

Source Documents: Articles from 300 journals, and books.

The interrelated character of research and scholarly inquiry in the two fields of history and philosophy emerges quickly in such interdisciplinary areas as intellectual history and medieval studies. Of interest to historians is the inclusion in *The Philosopher's Index* of materials on the history of philosophy, historiography, the philosophy of history, and history as a field of inquiry.

This database indexes and, in many cases, provides abstracts for journal articles published from 1940 to the present from about 300 journals, primarily English and European language publications but also a limited number in Russian, Chinese, and Japanese. Philosophy books published in English in the United States between 1940 and 1976, and those published in English outside the U.S. between 1940 and 1978 are indexed.

Successful searching requires a knowledge of how practitioners in the field of philosophy define words. This problem plagues database searching in most of the humanities, including history. For example, in *The Philosopher's Index*, "modern" refers to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not the historian's usual definition (Renaissance to the present) or the man-on-the-street's definition (the twentieth century). Terms like "being" and "self" are decidedly philosophical in meaning; and "American" is used loosely. Compounding the problem of what meanings are ascribed to terms, *The Philosopher's Index The-saurus* fails to define how terms are used in relation to one another.

A search of publication years in April of 1981 showed that no articles with publication years 1980 or 1981 had yet appeared, and only 15 percent of those that might be expected from 1979 were evident. Therefore, *The Philosopher's Index* does not serve current-awareness needs, a problem of the printed index as well as the machine-readable form. Researchers need to refer to other sources, such as the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* and manual searching of journals for more current literature. Historians will find *The Philosopher's Index* useful for supplementing other sources of

bibliographic information on topics of mutual interest to philosophers and historians.

*Social Scisearch* 1972- (DIALOG:7; BRS:SSCI)

Subject: Social and behavioral sciences.

Source Documents: Articles, book reviews, editorials, and brief communications from 1,500 social science journals, 2,400 journals in science; some monographs.

*Social Scisearch* is the online version of *Social Sciences Citation Index*. Its important feature is citation indexing. Additional points of interest are: subject searches are possible only on words in the title; the database provides only bibliographic information and citations; the file covers the core literature of the social sciences. Many history journals are now covered by the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, which is expected to be online shortly, though a number of history journals are still indexed in *Social Scisearch*, including histories of various disciplines. An important point to remember is that the use of the word history as a search term is often futile because that word must appear in the title of the article in order for the article to be retrieved—and, of course, not all articles on history have that word in the title! Attempting to limit a search to a specific geographical area is usually equally disastrous because geographical terms are not consistently present in titles. This database is useful to historians not only for the citation feature but also for the coverage of relevant articles from the social sciences.

*Smithsonian Science Information Exchange* (DIALOG: 65; BRS: SMIE; SDC: SSIE)

Subject: All subjects, but primarily science.

Source Documents: Research in progress or recently completed research funded by agencies of the federal government.

A fundamental and widely recognized problem in scholarly communication is the lack of awareness of ongoing and recently completed research. To begin to fill this need, the Smithsonian Science Information Exchange (SSIE) has generated a unique database of work in progress. Es-

established by the federal government in 1949, SSIE was a private corporation of the Smithsonian Institution. It ceased operation in October 1981. Responsibility for the database has been transferred to NTIS, who will continue to lease monthly tapes to vendors. Eighty percent of the total database is supplied by federal agencies, although data are gathered from more than 1,300 different sources. An increasingly important component in the database is the material from the social sciences and, to a lesser extent, that from the arts and humanities; thus the database is valuable for searching interdisciplinary topics.

Currently nearly 300,000 projects are in the SSIE database and more than 100,000 were added in 1980. Long-term projects are updated annually; a historic file is maintained for completed research. Each entry is assigned an average of fourteen subject categories drawn from a hierarchical classification scheme and SSIE subject thesaurus. The most obvious access point is by subject. Another popular search strategy is to use a scholar's name. The historian may profit from the recording of the increasingly broad spectrum of ongoing interdisciplinary research in SSIE.

#### Additional Databases for Searches in History

*ARTbibliographies Modern* 1974- (DIALOG: 56)

Subject: Nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and design including architecture, folk art, town and country planning, art history, etc.

Source Documents: Exhibition catalogs, dissertations, and articles from about 400 core journals and 2,000 journals in the humanities and social sciences.

*ATLA Religion* (BRS: RELI)

Subject: Religion, theology (with scholarly emphasis).

Source Documents: Books, articles, theses, book reviews. Periodicals, 1975- ; multiauthor works, 1970- ; festschriften, 1960-69.

*MLA Bibliography* 1976- (DIALOG: 71)

Subject: Languages, literature, linguistics, and folklore; medieval to contemporary.

Source Documents: Books, dissertations, and articles from approximately 3,000 journals and series and 700 collections per year.

*PAIS International* 1972- (DIALOG: 49; BRS: PAIS)

Subject: Current affairs, social sciences; social, economic, and political issues.

Source Documents: Articles from 2,000 journals, and 14,000 other publications (books, pamphlets, reports, government publications).

*RILM Abstracts* 1972- (DIALOG: 97)

Subject: Music, historical musicology, ethnomusicology, instruments, voice, performance, theory, pedagogy, music and related disciplines.

Source Documents: Books, articles, essays, reviews, dissertations, catalogs.

*SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS* 1963- (DIALOG: 37)

Subject: Sociology and related social and behavioral sciences.

Source Documents: 1,200 journals and other serials, conference reports.

*UNITED STATES POLITICAL SCIENCE DOCUMENTS* (USPSD) 1975- (DIALOG: 93)

Subject: Political science.

Source Documents: All articles from 150 U.S. scholarly journals.

## SELECTED LIST OF GUIDES TO DATABASES AND DATA ARCHIVES

*Compiled by Joyce Duncan Falk, Sharon A. Hogan, and Judith S. Rowe.*

*Catalog of Machine-readable Records in the National Archives of the United States.* Washington: National Archives Trust Fund Board, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1977.

*Computer-readable Data Bases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook.* Ed. Martha E. Williams and others. Washington: American Society for Information Science, 1979. Biannual.