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Gale's InfoTrac Total Access: All for One

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Gale's InfoTrac Total Access: All for One
The Gale Group's new product can simultaneously search many databases

"Search for what you need to know: Awaken to what you already are."
—Philip Toshih Sudoh, from "Zen Computer"

There is a persistent nightmare that I face as our library adds more databases to an already rich selection. The number of databases may someday discourage our users from using them. The number of databases may someday discourage our users from using them effectively; there are just too many choices. At Quinnipiac College, our complete screen of databases has 48 entries—with more on the way. Are we creating an electronic Tower of Babel that will crumble under its own weight? We try to help the situation by adding subpages for just the databases in business, health sciences, or liberal arts, but even in them there are many choices.

To that end, there is a new trend among software vendors to combine searches with different Web platforms. The Gale Group is releasing a new product this fall called InfoTrac Total Access. It is designed to use meta-searching in a single query to OPACs, search engines, free databases, and proprietary databases. According to the Gale Group, this is a true parallel distributed search. I saw a quick demonstration of this at this summer's ALA conference in New Orleans. That just whetted my appetite for a hands-on experience with the program. Recently, I was able to look at a test program, and I can report that this software is for real. I was able to get to this test screen only because I kept pestering my Gale representative until she gave up and sent me the URL and password.

The Test Drive
In the Total Access test screen, you can see that Gale chooses particular databases and search engines to work with the program. (As of this writing, there were 100 databases.) These are arranged in broad categories. (See Figure 1.) You can then choose which of the databases to search, and enter the search term.

The program then searches your query in all of the databases you have selected. A list at the bottom of the screen shows the status of the search. When one of the searches is complete, it will automatically display the results below the query box, and it displays the hit count for each database. The top results will also display on the main frame. (See Figure 2.) You may then work in that space to display the full results or limit the searches as needed, and print the results.

The results from the OPAC search (see Figure 3) show that the search term is automatically processed as a keyword search, but Gale writes that the libraries purchasing Total Access will be able to choose their own defaults. This is a nice option for our library, because we will prefer the greater focus provided by a subject keyword search.

After the initial search comes up automatically, the user simply clicks on one of the categories below to bring up a new cluster, and work with that set of hits. (See Figures 4 and 5.) I found that including quotes in multiverse queries improved the quality of hits in the search engines, but it can have the opposite effect in other databases. For instance, the search "James Dean" caused the actor to disappear from the listings in Gale's Biography Resource Center because its listing was based on "Dean, James." According to the company, Total Access does not have its own list of stop words. That is left for the databases themselves.

One thing I have noticed about meta-searches: they are not always as easy to set up as they appear at first glance. I tested an AltaVista search inside of Total Access and then went to AltaVista directly; I got the identical set of hits, but the hits were the ones you would get if you went to the client search engine yourself. I tested an AltaVista search inside of Total Access and then went to AltaVista directly; I got the identical set of hits, but the hits were the ones you would get if you went to the client search engine yourself.

Beta Testing Completed
After examining the software, I had a long talk with Valerie MacLeod, senior vice president of electronic sales at Gale Group. She told me that Total Access has passed its beta testing, and is now available in general release. As of this writing, the Suffolk County Library System in Long Island, New York, is already using the product, and at least one other country system in New York is ready to follow suit. Currently, libraries that own enough of Gale's products may obtain the software for free. This will include access to all of the Gale Group products that your library owns. However, there is a one-time set-up fee of approximately $500 for each of the other databases included in the product, according to Robin Cole, an account executive with Gale Group.

MacLeod told me that the beta test allowed the Total Access software from the servers at Gale. In the future, libraries may opt to load the software on their local servers. She said that the two main advantages for local mounting are response time and control. Libraries that maintain the software themselves will be able to tweak their own settings. For systems managers who can't get enough usage reports, MacLeod had some good news. She reported that Total Access will generate usage reports that are up to
The Faxon Company Awarded Endeavor EDIFACT Certification

The Faxon Company has announced that it has been certified by Endeavor Information Systems, Inc. to supply standard UN/EDIFACT serials invoice messages for the Endeavor Voyager System. Although Faxon has supplied EDIFACT format messages for users of the Endeavor Voyager system since December 1997, the EDI certification program was recently introduced by Endeavor, making Faxon one of the first vendors to receive official certification.

Commenting on the new Faxon certification, Bob Boissy, manager of standards and interface services at Faxon said: "Electronic Data Interchange has benefits for all parties. Faxon is pleased to join Endeavor in promoting the wider implementation of EDIFACT interfaces with our mutual customers."

Currently, The Faxon Company is able to handle X12 and EDIFACT transactions for invoices, orders, claims, and claims responses from publishers and customers. According to the announcement, the consistent position of Faxon has been to foster and promote the use of international, national, and industry standards for serials transactions. A forerunner in EDI solutions, Faxon has participated in both the Serials Industry Standards Advisory Committee (SISAC) and the International Committee for EDI for Serials (ICEDIS) since their inception. For more information on Faxon's commitment to EDI and EDIFACT, visit the company's Web page on electronic exchange at http://www.faxon.com/html/ser_health.html.

Endeavor recommends that customers planning to implement EDIFACT messages with Faxon contact customer support at 877/44-LLOYD or support@endinfoys.com. Customers are encouraged to discuss their implementation plans with Faxon's manager of electronic resources, Barbara Albee, who can be reached at 317/277-0168 or via e-mail at albee@faxon.com. FTP, bar code, and EDI services can also be requested from Faxon customer technical support at 800/753-2966 or via e-mail at helpdesk@faxon.com.

Based in Des Plaines, Illinois, Endeavor Information Systems, Inc. is an employee-owned information technology company that was formed in September 1994. For more information, visit the company Web site at http://www.endinfoys.com.

The Faxon Company, Inc., which provides a range of subscription-management services to libraries and information centers in academic, medical, business, public, and government communities, is a subsidiary of Dawson Holdings PLC and is independently traded U.K. company and worldwide supplier of information services since 1809.

The Faxon Company offers several Web-based products and services, including Information Quest (IQ). According to the announcement, IQ features a powerful search engine and multiple delivery options, and provides Web access to the full text of over 2,000 electronic journals. A free trial of IQ is available at http://www.informationquest.com.


EBSCO Publishing Releases EBSCOadmin 3

EBSCO Publishing (EBSCO) has announced the release of EBSCOadmin 3, the administrative component to EBSCOhost. With EBSCOadmin 3, library administrators now have a much greater ability to customize than ever before, according to the company. Products are now associated with particular interfaces, and a single URL address provides access to all EBSCO interfaces. EBSCOadmin 3 allows library administrators to control methods of authentication including the ability to have multiple profiles associated with a single IP address. This upgraded version will also allow administrators to download database title lists in USMARC format.

EBSCOadmin 3 brings more customization power to consortia members as well. All consortia members will be defined as individual customers, allowing each to generate specific reports, including usage statistics. With EBSCOadmin 3, administrators will have the option of running usage reports at the site, user-group, or profile level.

EOS International Presents Excellence in Library Automation Award

Electronic Online Systems (EOS) International has announced that it recently awarded the 1999 LITA/Gaylord Award in Library Automation to Elaine Devoss, director of Loomis Chaffee School's Katharine Brush Library.

"In presenting this award, EOS recognizes Elaine's outstanding dedication to automating her library and providing the Loomis Chaffee School with improved access to the library's information using appropriate and advanced technology tools," said Scot Cheaume, president and CEO of EOS International.

An EOS client since 1986, the Loomis Chaffee School moved to the Q Series library information management system in December 1998. One of the Q Series' primary benefits is that it gives students access to the school's collection through a single URL address.

Devoss said: "This is an extremely important feature, since we are a very busy school that places high demand on the library's collection. The Q Series' ability to provide access to a 'live' database gives students the leading edge in their dormitory or at their homes."

According to the announcement, the Q Series was nominated for the Computerworld Smithsonian Award for its innovative use of information technology and its ability to make information more manageable and accessible to users.


We welcome comments and suggestions from our readers.

Send your letter to the editor by mail, fax, or e-mail (halffrond@infotoday.com) or by way of our Web page located at http://www.infotoday.com.

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