

searchaid.txt

"Simplified database searching: products and services"

Peter Brueggeman

presented at San Diego Online Users Group program,
San Diego, 24 April 1985 (revised Dec. 1986).

Frontend: software or system used as a simplifying interface
between the searcher and the database; main feature
of a frontend is simplification of search commands

Micro-based frontend software: frontend software mounted
locally on the searcher's microcomputer; also known
as gateway software; main feature is command
simplification and may offer the following
features: autodial, autologon, search command
assistance, upload search strategies, download
search results, help features, database selection
assistance

search aid software is not the same as frontend
software; search aid software is designed for the
frequent or professional searcher and usually does
not simplify search commands

User-friendly system: a database service with its own
simplified search software

Gateway: a service with frontend software on its own
mainframe computer; this provides the online
searcher with a simplifying pass-through to the
database services.

MICROCOMPUTER-BASED FRONTEND SOFTWARE

SEARCHWARE

Searchware Inc.
22458 Ventura Blvd, Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
818-992-4325

menu-driven searching of DIALOG using offline-formulated search strategies
supports command-driven searching either online, or using offline-formulated search strategies

software is tailored to 54 broad subject categories using Dialindex-like categories; each subject category has 5-10 databases

receive billing monthly from Searchware with no minimum monthly billing; Searchware inserts a DIALOG password into its software; can use with your own DIALOG password

no tutorial assistance

for IBM PC or compatibles, or Apple

\$290 for the first subject category and \$100 for each additional subject category

\$15 offline demo disk available

MICROCAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Scientific Abstracts
5161 River Road
Bethesda, MD 20816
800-638-8076

menu-driven searching of DIALOG while online
focus on Cambridge's databases: ASFA (aquatic sciences), Oceanic Abs, Pollution Abs, Conference Papers Index, ISMEC (mechanical engineering), Life Sciences Collection

also supports online command-driven searching of DIALOG
designed to be database-friendly for Cambridge's databases as well as user-friendly in general

presents descriptive information on Cambridge's six databases only

supports selection and menu-driven searching of other DIALOG databases

stores search strategies

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for IBM PC with 128K RAM
cost is \$45
free offline demo disk available

SCI-MATE SEARCHER

Institute for Scientific Information,
Sci-Mate Customer Services
3501 Market St.
Philadelphia, PA 19104
800-523-4092

menu-driven searching of DIALOG, BRS, SDC, Medlars, Questel
either online, or using offline-formulated search
strategies

supports command-driven searching of any database service
extensive menus assist in search strategy formulation
no assistance in database selection
extensive tutorial assistance

Sci-Mate Searcher is part of the Sci-Mate Software System
which also includes: Sci-Mate Manager supports storing
and retrieving bibliographic and textual information;
also reformats downloaded references into its database
by using a standardized template. Sci-Mate Editor
reprints bibliographies in any specified style/format
or in pre-programmed style/formats for major research
journals; reformats references from Sci-Mate Manager
or from word-processed manuscripts

for most computers: DEC Rainbow, Kaypro IV or X, Wang PC, IBM
PC or XT, Apple IIe/II+, TRS 80 Model II or 12, or any
Z80 based microcomputer with CP/M 80 operating system
each component is \$399 each; if order more than one, get 10%
discount

SEARCHMASTER

SDC Information Services
2500 Colorado Ave.
Santa Monica, CA. 90406
213-453-6194

command-driven searching of SDC, DIALOG, BRS, NLM either

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online, or using offline-formulated search strategies
create your own front-end: supports offline creation of pre-
formatted search strategies (scripts); unusual feature
that allows experienced searcher to design search
strategy templates written in command language with
blanks where novice searcher fills in search terms; can
add tutorial comments, available files info, decision
points whether to review search results or modify the
search, as well as commands and logic
stores search strategies
on SDC, can run automatic, unattended searches and can type
ahead of search process
IBM PC or compatibles with 128K RAM
costs \$299

PRO-SEARCH

Personal Bibliographic Software, Inc.
P.O.Box 4250
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
313-996-1580

menu-driven searching of DIALOG 2 and BRS (called the "high-
level interface") either online or using offline-
formulated search strategies; the high-level interface
thus functions as frontend software for infrequent
searchers
command-driven searching of any database service including
Dialog 1 (called the "native mode") either online, or
using offline-formulated search strategies if the
service has a consistent user prompt; the native mode
functions as search aid software for frequent or
professional searchers
high-level interface offers menu-driven assistance in
selecting DIALOG and BRS databases; displays brief
database descriptions: scope, size, time span and cost
high-level interface and native mode both offer quick access
to information on Dialog and BRS database records (e.g.
fields)
high-level interface offers assistance in composing search
strategies using the different fields of the database
record
native mode translation option (called "cross emulation")
that supports searching in the command language of
DIALOG on BRS, or in the command language of BRS on
DIALOG (most but not all commands supported)

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type ahead of DIALOG, BRS, CAS Online, and Newsnet processing of the search strategy; you can configure for any service with a consistent system prompt
upload stored search strategies only to those services for which type-ahead is configured
uploaded search strategies cannot respond to NLM time overflow messages
can edit any uploaded search statements before they are processed by the database service
high-level interface supports hindsight editing of search strategy (subsequent search statements affected by the change are automatically rerun)
automatic downloading of search session into RAM buffer for online or offline review/printing/file creation
one-keystroke access to help screens
post-search processing features: high-level interface supports whole-record editing of search results; native mode supports line editing of search results
cost accounting features: for Dialog and BRS, produces printout coversheets, session invoices and monthly reports by database service, database, searcher, client or charge code; cannot add in an overhead fee
supports IBM Voice Communications Option-- text downloaded into the RAM buffer can be synthesized into speech
supports mailing label printing from downloaded DIALOG records from any database with name and address fields

does not support access to one service with two or more passwords (e.g. one password for recharged searches and one password for ready reference searches)

product is slanted towards Dialog and BRS; designed for accessing Dialog and BRS through several telecommunications networks but not supported for any other service (have to set up separate menu choices for accessing NLM through Telenet, Tymnet, and Uninet)

for IBM PC, XT, AT, IBM compatibles, TI Professional; plans for an Apple Mackintosh version: DOS Version 2.0 or later requires 256K RAM minimum; DOS Version 3.0 or later requires 320K RAM minimum; Voice Communications Option requires 400K RAM; more RAM than the preceding figures is desirable if you have RAM-resident software; hard disc is desirable for easier usage (to avoid the "floppy disc shuffle"); supports 300/1200/2400 baud modems

cost is \$495; copy-protected; reduced price of \$295 for Pro-Search with purchase of any other PBS product; PBS' Searcher's Tool Kit includes Pro-Search, Pro-Cite (file management software), and Biblio-Links for Dialog and

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BRS (Biblio-Link software converts downloaded Dialog and BRS information into the Pro-Cite database) for a package price of \$995; Biblio-Link software is available for \$195 each for OCLC and RLIN and is under development for NLM

working online demo disc available with manual for \$19.95; works for three connect hours of searching plus indefinite offline time; limited to a small subset of BRS and DIALOG databases

Pro-Search was developed by Menlo Corp. and recently sold to Personal Bibliographic Software, Inc; In-Search was an earlier version of Pro-Search designed for DIALOG 1

Review: Barbara Quint, "Menlo Corporation's Pro-Search: Review of a Software Search Aid", ONLINE 10(1):17-25, January 1986

GATEWAY SERVICE

EASYNET

Telebase Systems Inc.
134 North Narberth Ave.
Narberth, PA 19072
800-841-9553

computer service with its own frontend software supporting menu-driven searching of 9 database services: DIALOG, BRS, SDC, Pergamon InfoLine, Questel, Vu/Text, NewsNet, GTE MINET, and DataTimes using offline-formulated search strategies

dial 1-800-EASYNET and enter Visa/Mastercard/American Express number (can also get an EasyNet account number); no pre-registration required; access to EasyNet also available through Western Union's EasyLink e-mail service and CompuServe

menus assist in offline database selection and search strategy formulation; search is batch run and ten references downloaded to EasyNet computer for display to searcher

tutorial assistance

type "SOS" and get help from EasyNet personnel Mon-Sat 4am-7pm (PST)

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EasyNet selects the database for the searcher with obvious/practical selections; can bypass Easynet's automatic database selection to access more databases with searching on all searchable fields
for most databases, the cost is \$8 per database search, which includes up to ten references; each additional set of 10 references is \$8; no charge for no hits; abstracts are \$2 each
annual library subscription available for \$550; reduces search cost to \$5 each plus Telenet costs; Easynet either bills user and/or the library subsidizes all or part of the cost; get ten passwords and 3 customized introductory screens; prepayment discounts available
offers document delivery of references at \$8.50 each
access via terminal as well as microcomputer at 300 or 1200 baud
designed to retrieve a small set of references from any database without arranging individual contracts with each database service

USER-FRIENDLY SYSTEMS

KNOWLEDGE INDEX

Knowledge Index
DIALOG Information Services Marketing Dept.
3460 Hillview Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94304
800-334-2564

offers simplified command-driven searching of 34 DIALOG databases
access via terminal, word processor, microcomputer
online help
access (your local time): Mon-Thu 6pm-5am; Fri 6pm-midnight; Sat 8am-midnight; Sun 3pm-5am(Mon)
cost is \$35 startup fee (includes manual and 2 hours of free search time) and \$24 per search hour; no citation charges; no monthly minimum; billed to Visa, Mastercard or American Express; cost includes telecommunications cost

AFTER DARK

BRS/After Dark
1200 Route 7
Latham, NY 12110
800-345-4277

offers menu-driven searching of 60 BRS databases
access via terminal, word processor, microcomputer
no online help
access (PST): Mon-Fri 12am-1am, 6pm-midnight; Sat 12am-1am,
3am-midnight; Sun 12am-1am, 3am-11am, 4pm-midnight
cost is \$75 startup fee (includes manual) and \$6 per search
hour, plus database royalties (range from \$0-\$19 per
hour, depending on database); \$12 monthly minimum;
billed to Visa or Mastercard or American Express; cost
includes telecommunications cost

BRKTHRU

BRS/Brkthru
1200 Route 7
Latham, NY 12110
800-345-4277

offer menu-driven searching of 95 BRS databases
access via terminal, word processor, microcomputer
extra features compared to After Dark include rooting
of a given stem word, access the full database record,
more databases, daytime access, no monthly minimum
no online help
all-hours access (22hrs per day) with differential pricing
for prime-time and off-peak hours
access (PST): Mon-Sat 3am-1am; Sun 3am-11am, 4pm-1am
cost is \$75 startup fee (includes manual and \$25 free time);
prime-time cost (3am PST-6pm local time, Mon-Fri) is
\$35 per search hour, plus database royalties (range from
\$0-\$90 per hour, depending on database); off-peak cost
is \$17.50 per search hour, plus database royalties (\$0-
\$90 per hour); no monthly minimum; billed to Mastercard
or Visa or American Express; cost includes
telecommunications cost; about half of databases reduce
royalties for offpeak usage; citation charges for almost
all databases

BRS

offers menu option for regular search service at \$1 per session; type in "menu" when first prompted for database label

This review is limited to software and services used to access a multidisciplinary (horizontal) range of science databases. Omitted are software and services designed for a vertical (one discipline) market, e.g. GRATEFUL MED software and BRS/SAUNDERS COLLEAGUE service designed for medicine and medical databases

Miscellaneous Micro-based frontend software

IT (INFORMATION TRANSFER) PROGRAM

Userlink Systems Ltd
Mansion House Chambers
High Street
Stockport Cheshire SK1 1EG
United Kingdom
061-429-8232

menu-driven searching of DIALOG, ESA, Data Star, Pergamon
InfoLine using offline-formulated search strategies
extensive tutorial and database selection assistance
stores search strategies
cost accounting features
for IBM PC or XT with 128K RAM, DOS 2.0 or later, also VAX
11/750 minicomputer (VMS or UNIX operating system)

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cost is 395 pounds

SEARCH AID SOFTWARE
FOR THE PROFESSIONAL OR FREQUENT SEARCHER
Revised Dec 1986

Peter Brueggeman
Head of Public Services
Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library
UCSD C075C
La Jolla, CA 92093

Search Aid Software: also called frontend software or gateway software; search aid software software offers the following features: autodial, autologon, upload (send) search strategies developed offline, download (capture search results locally), store search strategies and search results, help features, some software allows the searcher to type-ahead of the processing of search statements by the database service, accounting features, some software offers database selection assistance, some software supports post-search processing of search results

search aid software usually does not simplify the use of a database service's search commands; frontend software's main feature is that it simplifies search commands

DIALOGLINK COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

DIALOG Information Services, Marketing Dept.
3460 Hillview Ave.
Palo Alto, CA. 94304
800-3DIALOG

command-driven searching of DIALOG or any database service
either online, or using offline-formulated search
strategies if the service has a consistent user prompt

type ahead of DIALOG's processing of the search strategy; you
can configure for any service with a consistent system
prompt

upload stored search strategies only to those services for
which type-ahead is configured

uploaded search strategies cannot respond to NLM time
overflow messages

can edit any uploaded search statements before they are
processed by the database service

can recall last line of search strategy for hind sight
editing (the last keyboarded line, not the last uploaded
line)

automatic downloading of entire search session into RAM
buffer for online or offline review/printing/file
creation

one-keystroke access to help screens

post-search processing features: supports line editing of
search results

cost accounting features: Dialoglink Account Manager
available for \$45; for Dialog sessions only, produces
printout coversheet, session invoices and monthly
reports by database service, database, searcher, client,
or charge code; cannot add in an overhead fee

does not support access to Dialog (or any other service) with
two or more passwords (e.g. one password for recharged
searches and one password for ready reference searches)

product is slanted towards Dialog; designed for accessing
Dialog through several telecommunications networks but

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not supported for any other service (have to set up separate menu choices for accessing BRS through Telenet, Tymnet, and Uninet)

for IBM PC, XT, AT, Compaq, AT&T 6300, IBM compatibles with 256K RAM minimum (more is desirable if you have RAM-resident software); DOS Version 2.0 or later; supports 300/1200/2400 baud modems

Dialoglink Communications Manager costs \$95; \$125 for both the Communications and Account Managers; copy-protected online demo disk available for \$10 (applicable towards purchase); works for 2 connect hours of searching plus indefinite offline time

Review: Aggi Raeder "Dialoglink: Product Evaluation of a New Communication Software from Dialog", DATABASE END-USER 2(4): 17-21, April 1986

PRO-SEARCH

Personal Bibliographic Software, Inc.
P.O.Box 4250
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
313-996-1580

menu-driven searching of DIALOG 2 and BRS (called the "high-level interface") either online or using offline-formulated search strategies; the high-level interface functions as frontend software for infrequent searchers

command-driven searching of any database service including Dialog 1 (called the "native mode") either online, or using offline-formulated search strategies if the service has a consistent user prompt; the native mode functions as search aid software for frequent or professional searchers

high-level interface offers menu-driven assistance in selecting DIALOG and BRS databases; displays brief database descriptions: scope, size, time span and cost

high-level interface and native mode both offer quick access to information on Dialog and BRS database records (e.g. fields)

high-level interface offers assistance in composing search strategies using the different fields of the database record

native mode translation option (called "cross emulation") that supports searching in the command language of DIALOG on BRS, or in the command language of BRS on DIALOG (most but not all commands supported)

type ahead of DIALOG, BRS, CAS Online, and Newsnet processing of the search strategy; you can configure for any service with a consistent system prompt

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upload stored search strategies only to those services for which type-ahead is configured
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automatic downloading of search session into RAM buffer for online or offline review/printing/file creation
one-keystroke access to help screens
post-search processing features: high-level interface supports whole-record editing of search results; native mode supports line editing of search results
cost accounting features: for Dialog and BRS, produces printout coversheets, session invoices and monthly reports by database service, database, searcher, client or charge code; cannot add in an overhead fee
supports IBM Voice Communications Option-- text downloaded into the RAM buffer can be synthesized into speech
supports mailing label printing from downloaded DIALOG records from any database with name and address fields

does not support access to one service with two or more passwords (e.g. one password for recharged searches and one password for ready reference searches)
product is slanted towards Dialog and BRS; designed for accessing Dialog and BRS through several telecommunications networks but not supported for any other service (have to set up separate menu choices for accessing NLM through Telenet, Tymnet, and Uninet)
for IBM PC, XT, AT, IBM compatibles, TI Professional; plans for an Apple Mackintosh version: DOS Version 2.0 or later requires 256K RAM minimum; DOS Version 3.0 or later requires 320K RAM minimum; Voice Communications Option requires 400K RAM; more RAM than the preceding figures is desirable if you have RAM-resident software; hard disc is desirable for easier usage (to avoid the "floppy disc shuffle"); supports 300/1200/2400 baud modems

cost is \$495; copy-protected; reduced price of \$295 for Pro-Search with purchase of any other PBS product; PBS' Searcher's Tool Kit includes Pro-Search, Pro-Cite (file management software), and Biblio-Links for Dialog and BRS (Biblio-Link software converts downloaded Dialog and BRS information into the Pro-Cite database) for a package price of \$995; Biblio-Link software is available

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for \$195 each for OCLC and RLIN and is under development for NLM

working online demo disc available with manual for \$19.95; works for three connect hours of searching plus indefinite offline time; limited to a small subset of BRS and DIALOG databases

Pro-Search was developed by Menlo Corp. and recently sold to Personal Bibliographic Software, Inc; In-Search was an earlier version of Pro-Search designed for DIALOG 1

Review: Barbara Quint, "Menlo Corporation's Pro-Search: Review of a Software Search Aid", ONLINE 10(1):17-25, January 1986

SEARCHWORKS

Online Research Systems, Inc.
627 W. 113th St., Suite 4F
New York, NY 10025
212-408-3311

command-driven searching of Dialog, BRS, NLM, SDC or any database service either online or using offline-formulated search strategies

type ahead of Dialog 2, BRS, NLM, and SDC processing of the search strategy; you cannot configure type ahead for any other service

can upload to any service (even if type ahead is not supported)

uploaded search strategies cannot respond to NLM time overflow messages

automatic "yes" responses to NLM's and SDC's "Continue printing?" queries using a function key toggle

can edit any uploaded search statements before they are processed by the database service

automatic downloading of entire search session into a disc file for online or offline review/printing/file creation

help screens for offline/online use with info on command syntax and search commands; has examples for the supported services with many of the examples being specific to Medline; can save and redisplay a specific line of info after returning online; permuted index to topics on screens

post-search processing features: reformatting of search results from several databases or database services to

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produce consistency in results; changing of database record field labels to specified labels; ranking of search results from most relevant to least relevant using user-defined ranking terms; sorting of results from one or more databases into an alphabetical sequence based on a user-defined database record field (one may rank or sort but not both); keyword indexing of results from one or more databases; record editing of search results using word or character-string searching of search results and whole-record deleting; limit of 4000 records for post-search processing

cost accounting features: produces printout cover sheets, session invoices including an option to add an overhead fee, fund accounting for up to 19 separate funds for tracking search expenditures and bills paid; user-defined specific time-period accounting reports

for IBM PC, XT, AT, IBM compatibles with 256K RAM minimum; more RAM is desirable - 384K or more RAM will allow for the maximum allowable number (4000) of records to be ranked or sorted; DOS Version 2.0 or later; hard disc is almost mandatory for ease of use (the "floppy disc shuffle"), for capturing large downloaded file sizes greater than 300K (about 200-300 bibliographic citations with abstracts), and for storage of user files with a combined size greater than 40K (search strategies, accounting files, and post-search processing format templates.)

cost is \$149; owners of Pro-Search may purchase SearchWorks for \$99 (supply copy of paid invoice when ordering); not copy-protected

no demo disc

Review: upcoming in DATABASE END-USER

PC/NET-LINK

Sterling Software
Information Systems Services Division
6011 Executive Blvd.
Rockville, MD 20852
800-638-6595

command-driven searching of 12 database services (DIALOG, BRS, SDC, NLM, Dow Jones, Lexis and Nexis, NewsNet, OCLC, RLIN, Westlaw, Questel) either online or using offline-formulated search strategies

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cannot edit unprocessed search statements while the search strategy is uploading; have to wait until the uploaded search strategy is finished before adding or changing search statements

uploaded search strategies cannot respond to NLM time overflow messages

database selection assistance through menus accessing an integrated directory of all services' databases with database descriptions

can customize database directory: subject headings in the database selection menu can be edited; databases listed in the index can be added or deleted; database descriptions in directory can be entered or edited

extensive tutorial assistance including printed command summaries for each service

for 10 Megabyte hard-disk IBM PC or XT or compatibles with 128K RAM minimum

cost is \$550; federal government agencies get discount price of \$400; Genesys Corporation's Telios communications

software is required and costs \$100 additional
requires Hayes Smartmodem 1200 or Hayes compatible modem