

**Selected Members of the CCL-EAR Committee Review
Of ProQuest's ABI/Inform Trade & Industry (PQT&I) Collection
January, 2002**

In January 2002 selected members of the Council of Chief Librarians Electronic Access to Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of Proquest's ABI/Inform Trade & Industry (PQT&I) Collection.

ProQuest *ABI/Inform Trade & Industry* is a source of information on business and finance. The database indexes 794 newspapers, magazines and journals, nearly all full-text. Most articles can be printed or downloaded in Text+Graphics format and/or Adobe Acrobat PDF. Topics covered include: business news, industry news, biographical stories on executives, financial news and business law.

Selected members of the CCL-EAR Committee, independently or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staffs, reviewed and evaluated Psychology Journals. Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member(s) only and not transferred to others. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the proposal to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Attributes of the information resource were assessed on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing the "least value" and 4 representing the "most value".

INFORMATION DATABASE

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

SEARCH INTERFACE

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

USER SUPPORT SERVICES

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone help line available?

COST

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

#1 --- No Support

#2 --- No Support at this time. Future support conditional upon enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 --- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College libraries for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below in Comments Section.

#4 --- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campus libraries for their acceptance or rejection.

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review as well as comments taken from the individual Review Reply Forms.

The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE 3, 4

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California Community Colleges as a whole

The ProQuest Trade & Industry (PQT&I) collection covers all the topics mentioned back to ca. 1980. As with most aggregate database products, full-text coverage begins mostly in the late 1980s. Prior material consists solely of citations and abstracts. T & I contains a great deal of information helpful to lower-division students in business administration, accounting and related majors.

This would be a wonderful database for those rare, very rare occurrences of a user with a very sophisticated finance, business, or accounting analysis need. The information retrieved on a sequence of searches was excellent, in-depth, and from a respectably broad and global range of sources.

SEARCH INTERFACE 4

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

Trade & Industry uses a standard ProQuest search interface with five options: Basic, Advanced, Guided, Publication [titles] and Natural Language. All methods except Natural Language allow Boolean operators.

User options include date range, full-text materials only, and/or peer-reviewed materials only. The student may limit search terms to Citations and Abstracts or may search Article Text. S/he may also limit searches to a particular subject module, such as PQT&I.

At my college, most students use the default Basic search method and search the entire database. They enter a word string and hit Enter. Fortunately, ProQuest interprets spaces as logical ANDs. Also fortunately, the default settings call for the most recent articles (1999-present) and searching through Citations and Abstracts. This assures that the novice user will likely retrieve recent, substantive stories.

If it were possible to alter these settings, I would restrict the output to full-text articles only. The purpose of ProQuest, after all, is to provide instant bibliographic gratification. Few of our students will copy paper or microfilm articles. Even fewer will use interlibrary loan. Our mantra is "full-text, full-text and more full-text".

Indexing: PQT&I offers many subject-specific search options, such as ticker symbol, DUNS number, SIC codes (although not the more recent North American Industrial Classification codes), corporate name and personal name. However, there are no alpha subject terms. For example, a search for "September 11" yielded many stories, but there was no link to stories on "Terrorism" or "Terrorism United States". This stands in stark contrast to ProQuest's General Reference database, whose alpha subject searching is excellent. The Business Module of *General Reference* found many subject terms directly related to the demise of energy company Enron, such as "Petroleum Industry" and "Acquisitions and Mergers". Both services, however, contain fewer subject headings than companion databases in the social and hard sciences. (Comparison: the Business Module contains holdings for 289 publications, not PQT&I's 794.)

The search type is selected from a pull down menu on the initial screen. Unfortunately to most users the difference between Basic and Advanced will not be clearly evident. The choices and limits are essentially exactly the same. What is different is the presence halfway down the page on Advanced Search of links to powerful tools such as the Thesaurus, help screens to introduce the function of Operators and truncation, Classification Tools, a listing of all stop words, and more. This information should be available from every search screen, not hidden halfway down a miss-named "Advanced" search screen. Again, to the casual eye there is no difference between the Basic and Advanced Search pages, especially if one has set the browser to a large or assistive font.

Basic search is essentially Advanced search without any visible on screen guidance. You have to choose Help to find any information about how to refine a search. Advanced has excellent Help visible but hidden halfway down the page. Natural Language Search results provide the user with a visible ranking of relevance based on number of stars the article has. This is becoming common in the online world and 5 star articles in most sample searches were significant for the search.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES 2 , 3

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone helpline available?

Online Help screens are available. The help screens are of average quality. The vendor supplies training to library staff as requested. ProQuest has 8 am to 5 pm ET (Mon-Fri) search help available by phone at the main technical support number option 2. One assumes this search help is primarily for librarians with search questions as the phone number is not readily findable from the online screens. The help screens are above average and my only complaint is that they are buried and that no more information than the word "help" is provided on the initial Basic Search screen.

COST 1, 3

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

For a general broad based community college audience, the extra coverage of business topics in PQT&I compared with Business Module would be cost-ineffective.

PQT&I would be a reasonable choice for a community college with a combination of a large transfer program and / or a large Business and Finance and related topics program.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE 4, 4

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

Access is reliable and stable, with quick response time.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT 3, 3

None of the reviewer's colleges have the depth of Business or Finance programs to justify buying access to *ABI/Inform Trade & Industry*. This does not mean that an appropriate level for the database could not be found somewhere in the rest of the CCC's.