

# search insider

**David Green, Head of Publishing at Informed Business Services (www.informed-ibs.com) gives IWR readers a special preview of the Dialog Corporation's LiveIntranet service, due for launch at Online Information 98 in December, and puts its development in perspective.**

The Dialog Corporation, the world's largest information vendor, was formed following the acquisition of the Dialog and DataStar services by MAID. MAID was able to raise the capital for this by emphasising the cost economies that it could bring to bear on the new organisation through restructuring, the elimination of duplicated functions and the streamlining of the product portfolio. Originally, this streamlining was to have been achieved by merging the datacentres of the three respective services – MAID, Dialog and DataStar – into a single integrated datacentre that would operate from the Dialog datacentre at Palo Alto in California, a location which was chosen for its technical and telecoms infrastructure.

Still, even with the best laid plans, Murphy's Law dictates that if it can go wrong it will, and the Dialog Corporation's first year has seen increasing customer dissatisfaction, primarily in Europe, a widely perceived lack of customer consultation and a fair degree of unfavourable press coverage as a result.

Two developments have sprung directly from this:

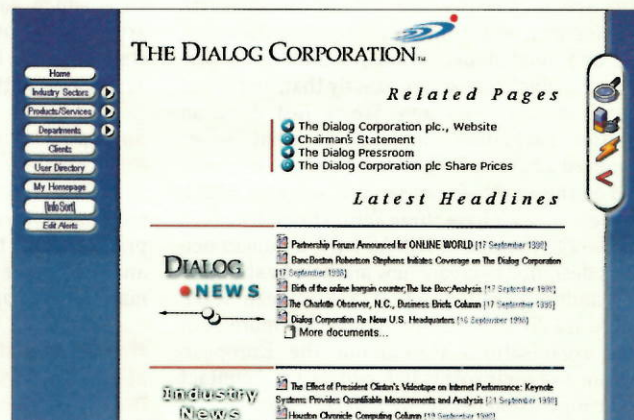
1. The launch of a customer dialogue mechanism called 'Europinion'. This service is a private Web site with participation from an invited customer base, giving these customers the opportunity to comment upon, and influence, product development and service deliverables.

2. A change in tactics (but not strategy) for the company's data integration plans – which was seen by many, not least *IWR*, as something of a U-turn. Rather than attempting to integrate the differing search and retrieval technologies of the three databases, the company is now focusing on linking its range of content. A single Web interface will provide a front-end functionality that creates a seamless integration to different datasets, while at the back end differing search and retrieval languages will scour each of the three database systems to deliver the requested information. The Dialog Corporation envisages that it will be 'test bedding' European customers on single billing for usage of all systems towards the end of this year.

Despite the resuscitation of DataStar for Windows, the majority of future product development will be Web based. In the words of Ciaran Morton, Senior Vice President, it would be "churlish not to utilise this development". Certainly if one were to chart the development of DOS, Windows and latterly Web technologies across time, it would be seen how these technologies have directly impacted upon the development of information products in terms of the migration away from command-based searching to form-based searching. The company

will continue to support existing Windows packages but will not be investing in any future development of them. Only Web-based products will feature new functionality and it is hoped that customers using Windows-based interfaces will 'voluntarily' migrate to a Web platform – as you would if you were offered the choice of Web, Web or more Web...

"We don't sell information." These are not words that you would expect to hear from the Senior Vice President of the world's largest content vendor. But, as Mr Morton went on to explain, "we don't want to be product specific". The emphasis is on leveraging technology investments to enable greater customisation – both for individual customers (for example scientists at Roche retrieve information from DataStar databases via an extranet and the results are presented as a Web page containing the Roche logo) and for segmenting content for different markets.



At its most basic level, information management addresses two fundamental requirements of the organisation: internal and external information. For years, information vendors/distributors have sought to fulfil the external information requirements of their customers by delivering an ever increasing range of sources. More recently, the rise to ascendancy of corporate intranets has resulted in the development of products both for the Web and for internal intranets. To date, though, most intranet products are little more than repackaged and re-priced versions of their Web counterparts with little real innovation to enable clear differentiation between the two. News alerting features based on push technology seem to have been the staple diet to date. Three years ago, the application of Windows and, shortly thereafter, a Web interface to the MAID database shook up the market and resulted in the 'dash for cash' – providers rushed to bring similar products to market in an attempt to capture the new 'end-user' market.

## Information World review



*the  
newspaper  
for the  
information  
industry*

**Stay informed for only £38\***

☐ I would like to subscribe to *Information World Review* for \*£38 UK /£45 elsewhere

☐ I am enclosing a cheque made payable to Learned Information Europe Ltd for £  please fill in as appropriate

☐ Please charge my credit card:

☐ Visa ☐ Access/Mastercard ☐ American Express

name on card

card number

expiry date

signature

☐ Please invoice me order number:

EC customers please quote your VAT number:

title first name surname

job title department

organisation

address

post code

country

tel

fax

e-mail

☐ From time to time we may allow other organisations to send you details of related products and services. Tick here if you do **NOT** wish to receive such information.

IWR 10/98

To order, please copy and fax this form to:



**Customer Service Department**  
**Learned Information Europe Ltd**  
Woodside, Hinksey Hill, Oxford OX1 5BE, UK  
T +44 (0)1865 388100 F +44 (0)1865 388056  
E-mail customerservice@learned.co.uk  
URL www.learned.co.uk



At Online Information 98, the Dialog Corporation will launch its new LiveIntranet product, which, I believe, could once again send shock waves through the market. As the name suggests, Dialog's new intranet product will seek to bring the organisational intranet to life. Central to this ambition is the application of the company's InfoSort indexing technology to internally-generated information.

While most corporations have guidelines concerning the management and development of their intranets, often the volume of published information simply becomes too unwieldy, resulting in user dissatisfaction. Attempts to mine these data warehouses have focused on free text searches, but, as information professionals, we all know the current limitations to these (we want documents about, not merely mentioning, a particular article). While search engine packages attempt to overcome this limitation by adding optional categorisation (whereby the author can categorise the document according to a 'pick list' such as date, department or topic) no two people think alike, thus resulting in different categorisation of articles. In a preview demo of LiveIntranet for this article, Russell Ward, Head of Intranet Development at the Dialog Corporation, explained how LiveIntranet overcomes this problem by *automatically* categorising a document. Essentially, the InfoSort software applies a mathematical algorithm that analyses the semantic and syntactical relationships in a document and then consults a 'rule base' to decide which terms to index the document with. For example, the InfoSort thesaurus will indicate that the search term 'repair' should also consider documents containing the terms 'fix', 'manual' and so on, with different weightings attached to each term accordingly. LiveIntranet will also categorise aspects of internal documents according to the 'scope' or index terms already in use on the Profound system, ie internal documents can also be categorised according to 750 market sectors, 63 scope/topic terms, 230 location terms and millions of companies. Other meta data similar to the standard 'pick list' of options provided by search engines (eg author) can also be added if required. LiveIntranet will currently only InfoSort the following file formats: PDF, HTML and documents

information that is relevant to their requirements. Alerts pop up on users' screens as an additional window, which they can then either click on for more details or close. When conducting a general search, results can be sorted by either date or relevance. However, LiveIntranet then enables the user to start 'drilling down' through the search result subset by refining the results according to country, scope term or market sector, with results re-ranked and sorted at each stage. Similar to Dialog Web, LiveIntranet will also display the current search strategy on screen at all stages of the search process. Also, in addition to categorising internal data to the same standards as used on the Profound service, LiveIntranet will also enable you to add external data from Profound to internal databases.

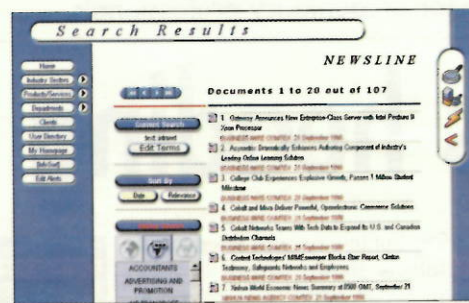
LiveIntranet is clearly a product that is targeted at the larger corporation – which is reflected in the pricing. Subscription to LiveIntranet, which includes GlobalNewsPlus and free table of contents, is, like most intranet products, based on a sliding scale with a fixed price according to different

bands. For example a licence for 1-50 users will cost approx £45,000 while a licence for 5000 or more users will cost approx £72,000. For customers wishing to InfoSort their own internal data there is an additional licence fee, which is not included in these prices.

To conclude, LiveIntranet is clearly an innovative development. The ability to homogenise the categorisation of internal information with external information (or at least that sourced from GlobalNewsPlus and other datasets) will offer corpora-

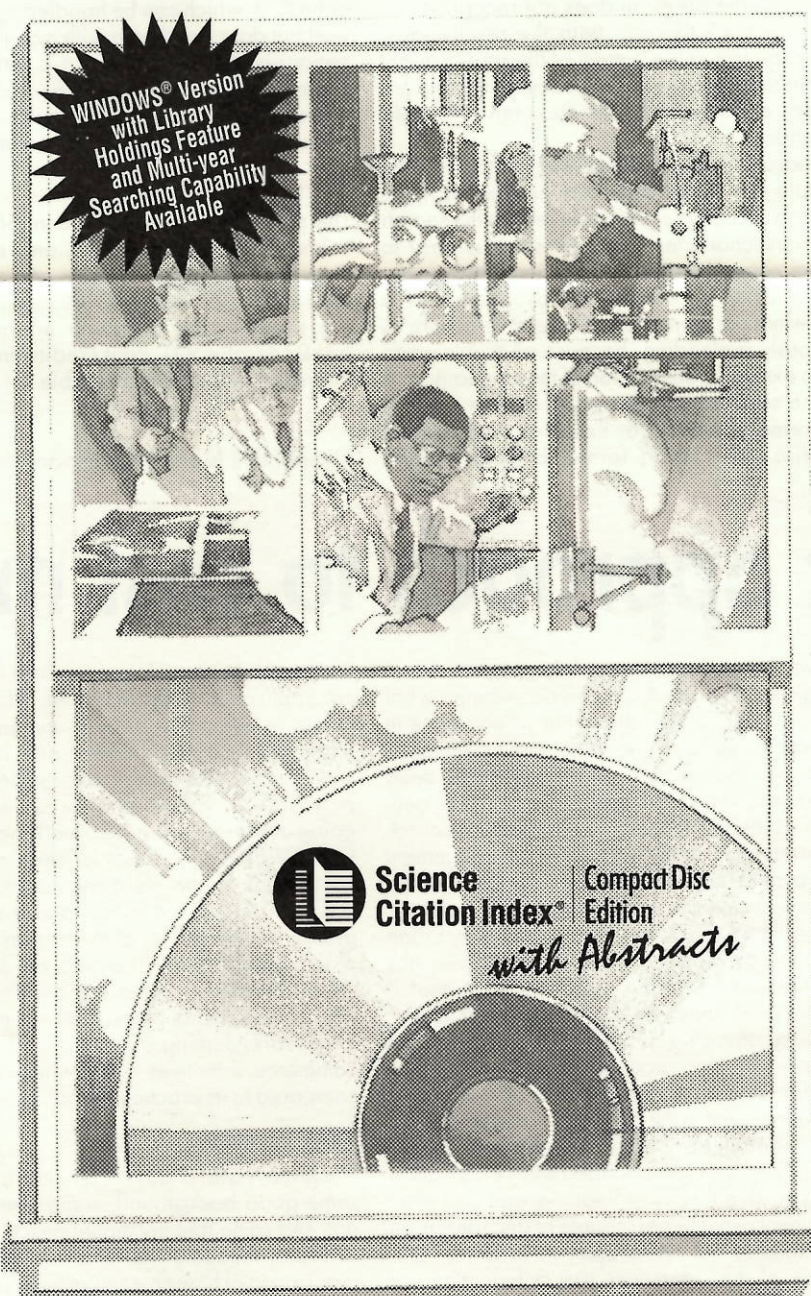
tions the real potential to search, manipulate and retrieve information regardless of source – the primary objective of any information management strategy. However, the pricing places this product beyond the reach of SMEs – like its MAID precursor, it is targeted at the premium percentage of large corporations. One word of warning though – a corporation that becomes fully or largely reliant on an external supplier for both its information management and information provision leaves itself vulnerable to the whims of that supplier. The Dialog Corporation is already the world's largest supplier of content – it also has a string of alliances that are enabling it to develop strong technological advantage over other information vendors. The world's number one content provider also becoming the world's largest information management solutions provider is potentially a dangerous combination. However, with the launch of Europinion and other recent events, Dialog has shown that it is responsive to customer concerns.

<http://www.dialog.com>



## We'll give you a spectacular view of the science world.

Science Citation Index® Compact Disc Edition with ABSTRACTS



The best thing is, you need go no farther than your PC—where you can see it all with the *Science Citation Index* Compact Disc Edition with Abstracts.

With simple keystrokes, you can view the bibliographic records of 3,500 leading science journals...and run quick searches to retrieve data about thousands of research topics.

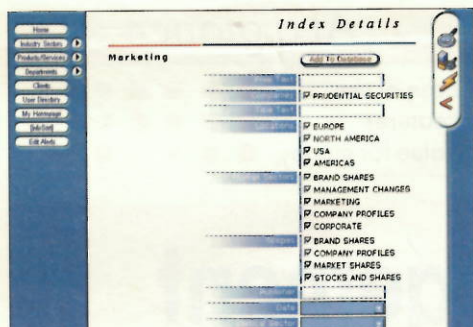
Another keystroke activates *Related Records*®, the powerful searching mechanism available only from ISI®. When you find one pertinent article, you're automatically led to many more, even if they have no title words in common! It's information you'd find no other way—information that could have a dramatic impact on your research.

Published monthly, the *SCI*® CDE includes searchable abstracts to make your search sessions even more complete. Reserve a free trial copy today. Call 1-800-336-4474 (U.S., Canada, and Mexico), +44-1895-270016 (Europe, Africa, and the Middle East), +81-3-5562-3571 (Japan), or 215-386-0100 (other parts of the world).

**ISI**  
Institute for Scientific Information®

- ◆ 3501 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104 U.S.A.
- ◆ Brunel Science Park, Uxbridge UB8 3PQ, United Kingdom
- ◆ Ark Mori Building 30 F, 1-12-32 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-6030, Japan

<http://www.isinet.com>



generated in MS Office. There are plans to extend this to other formats such as Lotus next year.

Added to this, the Dialog Corporation will work with customers to add an additional thesaurus that is customised to their needs, eg products/services, departments, clients and so on. This indexing ability of the InfoSort software was a key determinant in the Dialog Corporation being awarded a five-year contract to provide a customised news service for the BBC. Several other well-known information vendors had also pitched for this contract.

At the moment, LiveIntranet only offers data from the Profound service. It is anticipated that data from the other two services (Dialog and DataStar) will be made available via LiveIntranet next year, but which particular databases are made available, and the timescale, will be strongly influenced by customer demands.

Subscription to LiveIntranet includes delivery of the GlobalNewsPlus file onto an organisation's own servers, with near real-time updates throughout the day. For other types of information, such as market research and broker reports, tables of contents are provided for free. To access data from these reports it will be necessary to have a subscription to Profound, which is currently just under £6000 per year.

Because LiveIntranet categorises internal information automatically according to the same standards as used on the Profound service, it allows seamless searching across both internal and external information. For example, the live alerting feature not only alerts users to breaking news stories matching their search profile, but will also alert them to new internally generated