Using networked services

Introduction

Networked services include access to:

• electronic journals (ejournals)
• databases on CD-ROM
• inhouse tutorials - e.g., how to use the library
• the Internet.

Some are freely available to everyone, some only to members of an organisation which has paid for a subscription or licence, and some require payment for each use, or each item requested.

In this section we focus on the Internet, since it encompasses most types of networked services, and most kinds of databases. Searching techniques are also treated generically, since there are the same variations in using different Internet search engines as exist in different CD-ROM databases.

When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

• distinguish between different types of databases
• help clients to access networked services
• increase client awareness of networked services
• search bibliographic databases
• search the Internet
• search KineticaWeb
• identify and use new developments.

The main topics in this section are:

1. Types of databases
2. Responding to client requests for help
3. The Internet
4. Bibliographic databases
5. Kinetica
6. New developments

Types of databases

Library databases fall into several general categories.
**Bibliographic databases** give citations, subject terms, and sometimes abstracts of items. A catalogue lists citations and subject headings of items held in a library. A journal index lists articles from serials, conference papers, reports etc.

**Full text databases** contain the text of items rather than descriptions. Of course they also give the citation details. The Internet is a ‘full text database’ of websites.

**Directory databases** list information - e.g., personnel, organisational structure and functions. These include phone books and business directories.

**Numeric databases** store numerical information, and are often used to compile tables or statistics.

Some databases may combine more than one type.

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**Responding to client requests for help**

The difficulties clients experience using networked services normally fall into two categories:

- Clients need help because of inexperience or lack of confidence with computers
- There is something wrong with the network, an individual machine, an application, or an network connection.

The subtopics in this section are:

2a. General assistance
2b. Hardware and software
2c. Network connections
2d. CD-ROMs
2e. Printers
2f. Help clients to help themselves

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**General assistance**

All library staff should be able to provide general advice, such as which area of the library has computers connected to the Internet, or how to access CD-ROM encyclopaedias.

Clients may occasionally need help using the computers. In general, there should be signage near them, including clear instructions detailing how to log in and use the various resources.

Some clients may not be familiar with the online catalogue (OPAC). These systems are designed to be user-friendly, and
most users can follow the on-screen instructions. Some new users may need help to get started.

Tutorials on using the Internet effectively - e.g., efficient search techniques - should be available regularly for users.

If the library has the resources, it helps to dedicate computers to particular functions, and configure the desktop to display only those applications - e.g., Windows programs, Internet access. This reduces the accidental deletion and movement of files that confuses novice users.

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**Hardware and software**

If a reader comes to the desk and says ‘I can’t log in to…’ or ‘the … has stopped working’, try to establish what is wrong by asking questions. Ensure that they have read any messages, and preferably written them down. Often a careful reading of an error message is all that is needed for the user to solve their problem.

Take, for example, ‘I can’t get into the catalogue.’ First establish whether they are using the right computer. In most libraries, computers for different purposes are configured differently. Then, perhaps, are the power lights on? Is Windows or another desktop visible? Is the screen working? Is the mouse responding to movements? Is the keyboard locked out?

Answers to these questions will tell you if the user needs to reboot the computer (if your installation permits this). Perhaps they just need to click on the library management system icon. Rebooting solves many software problems. If it doesn’t, ask the user to try another computer if possible.

As a general rule, always try the computer yourself before you contact IT support. If none of the computers are working properly, you probably have network problems, and you must contact IT support.

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**Network connections**

The Internet service may get disconnected.

Try several steps before rebooting the computer. Ask the user to click on the STOP button on the browser toolbar, then the RELOAD or REFRESH button. Reloading creates a new connection with the site.

If there is an application error, you need to restart the browser. Your installation may not allow users to stop and start applications; you may have to do this yourself.
If the Internet connection is via an external modem rather than a Local Area Network (LAN), you could ask them to turn the modem off, then on, before restarting the browser. Also ask them to check how many lights are showing on the modem; fewer than 7 or so means there is no connection. No lights, of course, means it isn’t turned on.

If the computer is connected to a LAN, check by loading another application that needs the LAN. This will allow you to tell IT support whether you think you have a network. If other computers are still using the Internet and the LAN, ask the user to reboot the computer (if permitted), as it must be a problem with that machine. If this doesn’t solve it, ask the user to change machines while you contact IT support.

**CD-ROMs**  
•2d

When users have problems accessing CD-ROMs, there are several possible causes, but they are generally easy to isolate.

If a client comes to you with a CD problem, ask them to try a different CD. If that works, offer a second copy of the CD if you have one. If the second CD doesn’t work, you have a problem with the computer, so direct your user to another machine and call IT support.

If you don’t have another copy of a particular CD, there are a few things you can try. It is possible that the CD needs cleaning; do this and ask the user to try it again. It is worth trying it in another computer if one is available. Some machines have a greater error tolerance: sometimes slower ones, sometimes newer ones, work better.

It is important to identify and resolve the problem as soon as possible.

**Printers**  
•2e

Printer problems are of two main types:

1. The printer is trying to print but can’t. This is usually due to a paper jam or, less often, a lack of toner. Library staff usually attend to these, unless the organisation has a different policy. Clear instructions for clearing jams and adding toner should be available to all staff.

2. The printer is not printing at all. The power may be off, or the printer might need resetting (press offline, then online). Perhaps the client sent their document to the wrong printer. Ask them to check the destination of the print.
The network may be down; is anyone else able to print? Try to establish whether there is a problem with just one printer or all of them (if you have more than one).

Perhaps the document is unprintable. Ask the user to test the printer by printing a small plain text file.

**Help clients to help themselves**

Helping clients to use the network becomes easier with practice. If one problem occurs frequently, however, it is important that you talk to your IT support people, or your supervisor, about how to prevent it from happening so often. Maybe you need more signs or clearer instructions? Or perhaps a component has started to fail and needs repair or replacement? Your users will get frustrated if they have to deal with the same problem more than once or twice.

It is good client service to go with the client to the problem. However it is also important to encourage clients to try to resolve problems themselves. This empowers them: once they have isolated and fixed or bypassed a problem, they will be more confident in attempting to do so next time, and may not even need to ask for help.

**The Internet**

The Internet is an extraordinary source of information for libraries, the range and accessibility of which has never before existed. It is also a significant threat, since many people, including administrators and accountants, believe that it can replace (or in some cases already has replaced) the need for libraries.

The role of library staff must be to continue to deliver high quality face-to-face service to the clients who require it, using all our traditional skills and resources as well as acquiring new ones to take advantage of the changed environment. At the same time we need to use the Internet, and all the associated sources and services, to provide information electronically.

The subtopics in this section are:

3a. Increasing awareness of networked resources
3b. Linking clients to information
3c. Searching the Internet
Increasing awareness of networked resources

Keeping up-to-date with all the developments in networked information is a major challenge for libraries and information professionals.

You need to:

- surf the Web regularly, and print out, bookmark, and notify others about useful sites you find
- read the professional literature, e.g., Weavers web in *inCite* [www.alia.org.au/incite]. This is particularly helpful, as the links to the websites mentioned are live
- share your discoveries with friends, colleagues, and clients
- add links to the library’s website, to extend its usefulness and keep it interesting and current.

Linking clients to information

Educating users has always been an important part of our role as information providers. It is now even more necessary, since there are so many pathways to information that clients must learn to find their own way.

Our tasks include teaching clients to use electronic databases, including the Internet, to find information and/or references to information. The library must then be flexible enough to meet their requests to obtain the information, or assist them to do it themselves, whether by interlibrary loan or in other ways.

A good example of this approach is the Homework Help [http://www.library.act.gov.au/homework/] section of the ACT Virtual Library. This site uses frames to keep its users on the Homework Help homepage. This ensures that they don’t get lost, as linking without protection may send them off into the unknown. However, it is more difficult to read, and feels confined. If you link users freely to other sites, they need to know how to return to your site, using Back, Go, or History.

Searching the Internet

You need to understand what the Internet is, and (in general terms) how it works. Since you have completed part of this course using the Net, it is reasonable to assume that you have some relevant skills and understanding.

However, many people have jumped (or been thrown) into working on the Net without a clear view of where they are and what they are doing.
Here are some links to further information about using the Internet.

- What is the Internet? [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/WhatIs.html#Internet]
- What are browsers? [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/WhatIs.html#Netscape]
- What are search engines? [http://www.searchengineshowdown.com/features/]
- What are meta-search engines? [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/internet/search/metatut2.html]
- Techniques of searching [http://www.denison.edu/ohio5/infolit/b4techniques/]
- Boolean searching [http://library.albany.edu/internet/boolean.html]

For several comprehensive tutorials, go to the Librarians' Index to the Internet Internet training page. [http://www.lii.org/search?title=Internet+Training;query="Internet+training";searchtype=subject]

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**Searching the Internet**

**Using Netscape**

Your browser has many features to help you use the Web efficiently.

For each of these features, tick the box if you can use them confidently. For any of which you are not sure, go to Help in your browser, and read the advice and information provided.

If you are still not sure that you are using a feature fully, ask an Internet-savvy friend or colleague to guide you.

☑ Bookmarks
Your browser has many features to help you use the Web efficiently.

For each of these features, tick the box if you can use them confidently. For any of which you are not sure, go to Help in your browser, and read the advice and information provided.

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- Favorites
  - add
  - delete
  - organise in folders
- Go
- Encarta Online
- Toolbars - add/remove
- Sidebar - add/remove
- History
- Cache
- Can you find a site you visited yesterday?
- Can you maximise the screen by hiding all toolbars?
- Can you enlarge the font on the site you are viewing?
Bibliographic databases

Most libraries have some bibliographic databases on CD-ROM. These do not require an Internet connection, and can be used on stand-alone computers, or networked from the server. However, unless they are full text (e.g., *Australian public affairs - full text*), they only provide references and sometimes abstracts. You (or the client) then need to locate the articles. If you do not hold the journal, you may have to borrow it on interlibrary loan.

AUSTROM is probably the most common set of databases in Australian libraries. It contains databases in social science, law and education:

- AEI - Australian Education Index
- AFPD - Australian Federal Police Digest
- AGIS - Attorney-General’s Information Service
- ALISA - Australian Library & Information Science Abstracts
- APAIS - Australian Public Affairs Information Service
- ARCH - Australian Architecture Database
- ATI - Australian Tourism Index
- AUSPORT - Australian Sport Database
- CINCH - Australian Criminology Database
- CSI - Consumer Sciences Index
- DELTAA - Database on English Language Teaching for Adults in Australasia
- FAMILY - Australian Family & Society Abstracts Database
- MAIS - Multicultural Australia and Immigration Studies

Click on the **Next** button to continue.

Searching databases on CD

Searching these databases requires training and practice, as they have a range of indexes and specific search procedures to secure the most accurate and comprehensive results.

CD-ROM databases have different search protocols, and you need to familiarise yourself with those your library has. In general,

- You can choose which databases you want to search: you may search on one or several at the same time.
• You can specify the fields you wish to search.
• From your results, you can mark records, download and save them.

Searching for known items
The simplest searches are when you have one accurate piece of information - i.e., you are looking for a known item or set of items. Select the field in which to enter the information you have.

Phrase searching
In all databases, you need to know the rules for searching for a phrase. Some systems treat any two words typed together as a phrase. In others, “...” is used around the phrase to ensure that it is searched as one string of letters. In others, a near or adjacent command is used to search a phrase.

Author searches
In citation databases, there may be several versions of the author’s name. You could search separately on each variation of the name; use an index to look at name variations; or truncate the name. Which you use will depend on the database.

Subject searching
Searching for a subject is much less precise. First you must decide which words will be used for the subject in the database. Choose words according to the level of information the client wants, and the database content. Proceed in an ordered way. Analyse your subject into subtopics. Think of synonyms if your words don’t seem to find much.

Boolean operators and truncation
Use these and other standard search techniques. For more information about search techniques, go to the sites referred to in the previous section about the Internet.

Examine your results
If you get:
• few hits, expand your search by truncating the subject(s)
• lots of relevant hits, ask the client if this is sufficient. If not: expand the search using truncation.
• lots of hits but many are irrelevant, combine another aspect of the topic using AND, and repeat this step until you have a satisfactory result.
Kinetica

Kinetica is the main source of bibliographic information for Australian libraries. It is a set of membership services accessible via the Web. Libraries contribute data about their collections, including original catalogue records, and use the shared information to locate material and copy much of their cataloguing.

The backbone of Kinetica is the National Bibliographic Database (NBD), which combines the original catalogue records and holdings statements of participant libraries including the National Library of Australia, and records from major international cataloguing agencies, in particular the Library of Congress, the Singapore National Bibliography, the New Zealand National Bibliography, the New Zealand Bibliographic Network, and the British National Bibliography.

Kinetica also provides access to other databases, including Kinetica Authorities, Australian National Chinese, Japanese and Korean Service Database, RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network) Books and Serials, RLIN Non Books, and RLIN Authorities.

Kinetica services are:

- **KineticaWeb**: This allows users to search the NBD for records, update their own library’s holdings, and download MARC records into their library systems. An interface is being developed to enable libraries to add simple original cataloguing records.

- **Kinetica Client**: This is a full cataloguing interface for libraries to catalogue items, create and maintain authority records, and update their holdings. Records can be downloaded into local systems.

- **Kinetica Document Delivery**: This is the interlibrary loan system via which libraries request material from and lend it to other libraries. It tracks all transactions including payment.

Full documentation, including training manuals and user guides [http://www.nla.gov.au/kinetica/kineticadoc.html], are available.

**New developments**

Change is taking place in information technology at an extraordinary rate. Most of the services and resources treated in this section of the course did not exist five years ago or, if they did, were available only to very few people.
This trend can only continue. Trillions of dollars are being spent to develop and promote new technologies, and our task is to try to keep up with them, incorporating them into the services we provide to clients, and endeavouring to ensure equitable access to all members of the community. Libraries have spearheaded many campaigns for free and fair access to all forms of information, and we must continue to apply this ethos to our work, as we adopt and adapt new technologies.

The developments discussed here are not comprehensive, but the principles of investigation and evaluation apply generally.

The subtopics in this section are:

6a. Setting up and/or maintaining a website
6b. Connect to a reference service
6c. Digitisation
6d. E-books

**Setting up and/or maintaining a website**

Every information agency needs a website. It can be simple or complex; it may only supply information about the organisation and its resources, or it can provide links to the world of information on the Internet.

One of the best things about the Web is that it is easy to add to, subtract from, and alter. Changes are quick to make, and immediately visible to viewers. Of course this creates an expectation that the information is completely up-to-date, and this is sometimes a difficult standard to meet if your resources are limited.

There are companies that design, mount and maintain websites. Many organisations, including libraries and the larger organisations of which they are a part, have this expertise inhouse. And there is a lot of help on the Net for those who decide to do it themselves.


**Connect to a reference service**

The more interesting and useful your website, the more often your clients will visit it.
One way of adding value is to incorporate links to search engines and other Web utilities. Most utilities encourage linking, though there are copyright restrictions on copying or reformatting material.

One such service is the xrefer reference engine. They provide clear instructions [http://www.xrefer.com/get_box.jsp] for adding xrefer's engine to your website.

Linking to other sites makes excellent use of this characteristic of the Net, and can provide your clients with a wealth of information, with very little effort on your part. However broken or outdated links are very annoying, so you need procedures for checking and maintaining your links. This may be an inhouse procedure, or a commercial service, like Linkalarm [http://linkalarm.com/].

**Digitisation**

Digitising library material means converting printed works into electronic format. This enables it to be stored on a computer, searched using sophisticated automated search techniques, and transmitted to distant users, on media such as CD-ROM or floppy disc, or via the Internet.

There is a growing amount of digitised material freely accessible on the Web. Other items are restricted to qualified users by copyright or other legal provisions.

The National Library is digitising some of its own collections, and working with other Australian libraries to convert important research material.

The Australian Cooperative Digitisation Project, 1840-45 [http://www.nla.gov.au/acdp/] is converting Australian serials and fiction of the period 1840-1845, ensuring access to and preservation of the material by microfilming, scanning and networking.

Picture Australia [http://www.pictureaustralia.org/] consists of links to digitised images of all forms of Australiana.


**E-books**

**What is an e-book?**

E-book is a term used to describe a monograph available electronically. It could be:
• a novel published on a website
• a short story downloaded from a floppy disc
• an extremely long email.

**E-book readers**

E-books can be read using:

• a handheld computer, personal digital assistant (PDA) or palmtop (e.g., Palm Pilot)
• a dedicated e-book reader designed solely for reading e-books
• software installed on a standard PC or laptop.

Currently e-book formats are not technically compatible, so that an e-book designed for one device cannot be read by a different one. The industry is working to produce a standard to solve this problem.

**Challenge for libraries**

Libraries must decide how to deal with this new technology. Some are already exploring integrating e-books into more traditional library service. This is discussed in the comprehensive paper An e-book primer [http://www.earl.org.uk/policy/issuepapers/ebook.htm].