DIALOGLINK: SEARCH AID SOFTWARE FOR LIBRARIES

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Search aid software is simply telecommunications software
designed specifically for online database searchers. Search
aid software is typified by DIALOGLINK (DL), marketed by
Dialog Information Services, and PROSEARCH, marketed by
Personal Bibliographic Software (who also market PROCITE).
DL offers features for the database searcher that are better
designed and more user-friendly than the features of general
telecommunications software (e.g. Crosstalk, Smartcom,
Qmodem). DL has been used in the SIO Library by the
reference librarian, reference and ILL assistants for approx.
eighteen months; it is used for subject-oriented database
searching, bibliographic verification, electronic mail,
ACQUISITIONS LIST production, and general telecommunications.

DL supports telecommunications access to any destination; DL
can access Dialog, BRS, STN, NLM, and Melvyl databanks,
electronic mail systems, campus computers, etc. DL presents
a directory of destinations and has one-keystroke logon.
DL's capabilities are next utilized to minimize connect time.
Commands can be keyboarded while online or while offline.
Offline keyboarding in advance of logon is supported if the
destination has a consistent command prompt; Dialog, BRS,
STN, NLM, and Melvyl all have consistent command prompts
(Melvyl's is an arrow). Offline-formulated commands are
uploaded line-by-line to the destination; the searcher can
keyboard ahead of the processing of the commands. Any
command can be edited before it is processed by the database
service. The last command sent can be recalled and after-
the-fact edited to remove typos without having to rekeyboard
the whole command.

DL automatically downloads the entire session into RAM
buffer to allow scrolling up and down through the session
while online or offline. This is very helpful for looking
back at what was done earlier in the session. Since the
entire session is automatically downloaded, the searcher,
while online, does not have to invoke printing and

downloading-to-disc protocols or mess with the printer paper.
Results are reviewed while offline and then printed or
downloaded-to-disc. By handling results after logoff, online
connect time is minimized by directing the searcher's effort
toward one thing only --the search session.

DL offers post-session line-editing of results; results can
be cleaned up before printing or downloading-to-disc. For
example, Phyllis Lett produces the Library's bimonthly
ACQUISITIONS LIST by searching for new books on Melvyl in
broad-subject category batches and then line-editing the
Melvyl session before capturing the cleaned-up records to a
disc file. The disc file is then wordprocessed into the
published LIST by adding headings for the subject categories.
LIST production using DL requires minimal proofing and
involves less keystroke effort compared to using INNOVACQ
records.

DL offers one-keystroke access to help screens and has cost
accounting features. A Dialoglink Account Manager (available
for Dialog sessions only) produces printout coversheet,
session invoices and monthly reports by database service,
database, searcher, client, or charge code; it cannot add in
an overhead fee. The operational needs of the SIO Library
do not require this capability so it is not used.

DL's shortcomings are few and not fatal. It cannot upload
whole files; it is oriented to line-by-line uploads. Thus
Crosstalk is used for CLASS ONTYME access by the ILL staff.
DL's directory does not support two-password access to any
destination (e.g. one password for recharged searches and
one for ready reference searches). DL only supports multiple
telecommunications network access for one Dialog password;
the searcher has to set up separate menu choices for
accessing BRS or a second Dialog password through Telenet and
Tymnet.

DL cost $125; the accounting module costs $45 additional. An
evaluation disc is available for $15. Contact Pete
Brueggeman, SIO Library, if you want a demonstration. DL
will run on IBM PC, XT, AT and compatibles, Compaq, and AT&T
6300. DL runs on DOS Version 2.0 or later, needs 256K RAM
minimum (more is very desirable if you have RAM-resident
software), and supports 300/1200/2400 baud modems.

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

Joanne Witiak "Dialoglink: a Review of Dialog's
Search Assistance Software", ONLINE 10(6): 39-42,
November 1986