Zoological Record on Compact Disc
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Ratings:

Ease of Installation ****
Ease of Use **
Product Support ****
Overall Value ****

Product: Zoological Record on Compact Disc

Search Software: PC-SPIRS (SilverPlatter Information
Retrieval System), version 3.21a5 was reviewed. MacSPIRS for
Macintosh also available.

System Requirements: PC and Macintosh products are available.
Minimum PC requirements are: DOS-compatible computer with DOS
version 3.1 or higher, 640K RAM with 500K of free RAM, hard
disk drive with 650K available for PC-SPIRS software and
2.5MB available for temporary storage of search data, MS-DOS
CD-ROM Extensions version 2.0 or higher, ISO 9660-compatible
CD-ROM drive, monochrome or color monitor, and a floppy disk
drive. Minimum Macintosh requirements are: Macintosh Plus,
2MB memory, monochrome or color monitor, System 6.0.3 or
higher, 20MB hard disk or larger, ISO 9660-compatible CD-ROM
drive, and a floppy disk drive.

Price: For Zoological Record print subscribers, Volume 130
(on one disc) costs $900 (US) or $995 (non-US) with quarterly
updates. For non-print subscribers, Volume 130 (on one disc)
costs $3,080 (US) or $3,380 (non-US) with quarterly updates.
For Zoological Record print subscribers of at least nine back
volumes, Volumes 115-129 (on two discs) costs $6,700 (US) or
$7,370 (non-US). For non-print subscribers or subscribers to
fewer than nine print back volumes, Volume 115-129 (on two
discs) costs $10,100 (US) or $11,090 (non-US).

For More Information, Contact: SilverPlatter Information, 100
River Ridge, Norwood MA 02062-5026 USA. 617/769-2599,
800/343-0064, Fax: 617/769-8763.

Intended Audience: Anyone interested in citations to the
zoological literature. Audience will primarily be college
and university but will also include zoo, wildlife and

aquarium professionals, wildlife photographers, and
nonprofessional enthusiasts/breeders of birds, reptiles
including snakes, amphibians, insects, fish, coral, etc.

Description: Need citations to the research literature on
zoology? Zoological Record (ZR) is the preeminent index to
that literature and accesses over 1.1 million citations
without abstracts. ZR attempts to comprehensively reference
such facets of the zoological literature as behavior,
ecology, physiology, taxonomy, evolution, life history,
morphology, and reproduction. More experimental topics such
as biochemistry, immunology and toxicology are covered
selectively. ZR currently indexes books, reports, meeting
proceedings, and approximately 6,500 periodicals including
popular periodicals and newsletters.

ZR's international coverage is one of its strengths. For
Volume 128, 49% of the periodicals originated in Europe and
the Middle East, 21% in North America, 22% in Asia and
Australasia, 5% in Central and South America, and 3% in
Africa. ZR's closest rival in zoological coverage is
Biological Abstracts (BA) which has the advantage of
abstracts. Comparing one volume of ZR to BA for each animal
group, ZR offered 25% -70% unique references (Chisman, 1989).
For example, in that one volume, ZR had 272 (70%) bird
references and 172 (45%) fish references that were not in BA.

ZR uses the familiar PC-SPIRS software by SilverPlatter and
ZR will integrate well into college and university libraries
using other SilverPlatter products. Reviewed previously,
most library users will be familiar with PC-SPIRS. As
contemporary non-Windows DOS software goes, PC-SPIRS'
appearance is substandard and it is not intuitive in use.
The opening FIND screen lacks prompting text that tells a
novice user how to start searching. Instead it tells the
user how to invoke online help for guidance; a significant
percentage of novice users ask support staff for assistance
rather than reading online help. Far better would be to
display basic how-to-search information on PC-SPIRS' FIND
screen as does NISC's ROMWright software on its equivalent of
the FIND screen. Worth noting is that SilverPlatter fixed
successive display of references with this version of PC-
SPIRS. References will display one after another with the
title of each reference appearing at the top of the screen as
the user presses CTRL and PgDn keys simultaneously. How does
the user find out about this critical CTRL/PgDn capability?
Read the manual or ask support staff; no prompting appears
onscreen. Version 3.21a5 of PC-SPIRS improves disc swapping

so that the Xchange command is not needed. Simply eject a
disc and insert a new one; PC-SPIRS automatically detects the
change and resets itself for the new disc!

SilverPlatter put ZR's thesaurus on disc! Since ZR does not
have abstracts, utilization of thesaurus terms in combination
with title keywords is essential for comprehensive retrieval.
Subject terms, taxonomy, geography (including zoogeographical
regions like Nearctic Region), and geological time periods
can be browsed and displayed in ZR's tree-structured
hierarchical thesaurus. Terms that are broader or more
specific than the entry term can be readily identified.
Scope notes that describe the use of specific thesaurus terms
can be displayed. All of the specific terms under a broad
term can be selected through a one-step explode feature as if
one had typed in all those terms separately! For example,
exploding on marine habitat retrieves all references indexed
with more specific subject headings like hydrothermal vent,
lagoon habitat, marine shore habitat, beach, tide pool, reef
habitat, sea ice habitat, surf, etc. Exploding on subject
and geographical terms makes ZR much easier to use for
comprehensive retrieval of broader topics.

British spellings are used in the thesaurus (ie behaviour,
colour, Caenozoic, haemocytes) which makes the thesaurus an
occasional obstacle to Americans. If "behavior" or "feeding
behavior" is searched in the thesaurus, one sees the British
equivalents since those terms are nearby in the index.
However searching Cenozoic in the thesaurus does not reveal
the preferred spelling, Caenozoic. For users searching
Americanized words through FIND, search results will be
limited to title keywords if proper British spelling is not
used; the critical benefit of thesaurus terms for assisting
retrieval will not be utilized. ZR would benefit from value-
added processing to enhance records with Americanized
spellings in addition to the British spellings.

ZR's greatest strength has always been its incredible
taxonomic indexing wherein all species in each reference are
indexed at every level of their taxonomic hierarchy.
Taxonomic terms can be browsed through ZR's thesaurus
feature; this is useful to verify spelling of taxonomic
terms. However taxonomic searches are usually best
accomplished as FIND searches and not as exploded thesaurus
searches for reasons of speed and recall. Since each
reference's indexing includes the complete taxonomic
hierarchy, it is faster to search directly on a specific
level of the taxonomic hierarchy in order to retrieve all of

the references down to the species level. For example, on a
486 microcomputer with a single-speed CD-ROM drive and the
1993 ZR volume, a FIND search on the class COPEPODA took 1
second and an exploded thesaurus consumed 15 seconds. The
FIND search retrieved three more relevant references than the
exploded search.

ZR will be indispensable to libraries that were already
subscribers to most or all sections of the print version.
However its market is broader than that. SilverPlatter's
next step should be to produce phylum-specific or aggregate
products like the print subscriptions eg non-Insect ZR,
mammal ZR, and bird ZR. More price points would be available
thereby bringing ZR into the reach of more budgets
particularly smaller non-profits like museums and zoos.

- Peter Brueggeman, Public Services Librarian, Scripps
  Institution of Oceanography Library, University of
  California San Diego, San Diego, California.

Chisan, Janet K. "Zoological Record, Biological Abstracts and
Biological Abstracts/RRM: a comparison of overlap" RQ
29(2):242-247, Winter 1989.