

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (IDRC)

DEVELOPMENT DATA BASES: USE IN CANADAOBJECTIVES

In June 1979, the Board of Governors of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) approved a two-year project to make available on-line, the Centre's data bases as well as the data bases we receive from international organizations, to Canadian government and not-for-profit institutions. At present, IDRC is the only institution in Canada that has acquired the bibliographic data bases compiled by Unesco, FAO, ILO and UNIDO. These data bases contain a high proportion of information dealing with development and the developing countries. If the IDRC is to support Canadian scholars and scientists in their development research, then the information in these international bibliographic data bases stored at the Centre should be available to them. By making the data bases available to Canadian scholars and scientists we are furthering one of the Centre's objectives which is "to foster cooperation in research on development problems between developed and developing regions for their mutual benefit".

PROJECT START

During the first nine months of the project, we concentrated on upgrading our hardware and making the necessary systems modifications to enable us to offer this service. Beginning 1 April 1980, we commenced a phased program of making the data bases available on-line to selected Canadian institutions and government departments. The purpose of this project is to test the technical feasibility and usefulness of the service and to give the Canadian research community access to development oriented data bases.

USERS

In choosing participants for this project, we require that the institution (1) have some experience in using on-line data bases; (2) have an interest in one or more of the data bases offered; (3) have control over its user groups; and (4) be willing to provide us with feedback on the use of the service. The participants access the development data bases using terminals in their institutions and standard telephone lines to communicate with the IDRC's Hewlett-Packard 3000 computer. The MINISIS software is then used to obtain the required information from the data bases. Records obtained from a search can then be printed on their remote printer or be generated on the IDRC's high speed printer and mailed to the researcher.

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As of May 1981, forty-five (45) institutions were included in this network, from Newfoundland to British Columbia. During the pilot project phase, this service is being offered essentially free-of-charge. If there is no local Datapac outlet, users are required to pay any long distance charges, but IDRC will pay for the computer time and small-volume printouts.

DATA BASES AVAILABLE

At the present time, seven data bases are available for on-line searching. Three of these are compiled by IDRC and constantly up-dated:

- 1) BIBLIOL (approximately 36,000 references) covers literature collected to service the needs and objectives of the IDRC as a whole.
- 2) DEVSISL (approximately 4,000 references) is an international, cooperative information system covering literature on the economic and social aspects of Third World development. At present it is an experimental data base consisting of bibliographic references provided by the following countries: Canada, Sri Lanka, West Germany, Indonesia, Morocco, Netherlands, Bangladesh, India, USSR, Pakistan and the Philippines.
- 3) SALUS (approximately 7,000 references) covers literature mainly on low cost rural health care and health manpower training in developing countries.

The four other data bases are up-dated three or four times a year:

- 4) FAO (approximately 30,000 references) contains the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome, Italy, Library documentation data. Much of the documentation deals with developing countries, the enhancement of food production in these countries and questions of trade in agricultural products between these countries and the rest of the world.

- 5) ILO (approximately 60,000 references) is compiled by the International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva, Switzerland. This data base contains general information on labour (employers-employees relations, industrial safety, etc.) but covers also information specific to the developing countries (employment creation, labour-intensive manufacturing methods, role of women in development, etc.).
- 6) UNESCO (approximately 25,000 references) covers documents written by or for Unesco, Paris, France, dealing with a broad range of educational, scientific and cultural programs with an increasing emphasis on development issues.
- 7) UNIDO (approximately 10,000 references) covers documents written by or for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, Austria, concerned with the improvement of industry in developing countries.

Unesco, FAO and UNIDO operate services to make microfiche copies of their own documents. By using these services as well as the various depository collections in Canada (particularly the Department of External Affairs, Agriculture Canada, Guelph University, CISTI, etc.), Canadian users should have little difficulty in acquiring the actual texts of documents selected from these data bases. The IDRC Library staff offers back-up services to solve any problem encountered in this matter.

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

- Users manual: reference and self teaching guide to the use of the QUERY processor within the MINISIS system.
- Users guide: a summary of the Manual.
- Data base description: supplies information on supplier, content, period coverage, and updating frequency of the available data bases. This off-print is mainly used by the institutions to publicize the service to their clients.

- Communique. Development data bases: Use in Canada:
news release providing current information on system changes and various query problems.

STATISTICS

From the 22 April 1980 to the 22 April 1981, forty-four (44) institutions were linked to the Canadian development data base network, composed of 31 academic organizations, 9 federal government departments, 3 provincial government departments and one non-governmental organization. All provinces were represented except Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick who were not ready for accessing our system at that time.

The following statistical data give indications on the use of the data bases for that period:

- User/months	199
- Number of sessions (The number of times a data base is accessed for performing searches)	2123
- Average per user/month.	11
- Average per user/day	.5
- Extrapolation with 50 users (sessions) (if usage continued at the same rate)	25/day
- Jobs executed (number of times a data base is accessed for performing off-line listings)	831
- Average number of jobs per user/month	4
- Average number of jobs per user/day	.2
- Extrapolation with 50 users (jobs)	10/day
- Number of records printed off-line (since November 1, 1980, during 148 user/months)	21,719

We have noticed increased use of the data bases as the participants become more familiar with our system. In short, we hope that this wealth of international documentation will be better known to the Canadian researchers.