News Briefs

EBSCO Online Offers Access to E-Journal Articles

EBSCO Subscription Services has announced that customers who subscribe to e-journals via its EBSCO Online service now have access to more than 1 million articles. In building content for EBSCO Online, EBSCO has formed partnerships with more than 90 leading publishers of STM (science, technology, and medical), mathematics, humanities, and social sciences journals for access to their electronic titles.

Source: EBSCO Subscription Services, Birmingham, AL, 205/991-6600; http://www.ebsco.com.

Quicklaw America Releases Minnesota Legal Collection

Quicklaw America has announced the release of a new research service for the Minnesota legal community. Access is available through the Internet with transactional and flat-rate pricing options.

Quicklaw America materials of particular relevance to Minnesota legal practitioners include U.S. Supreme Court decisions, Minnesota Supreme Court decisions, Minnesota State Appellate Court decisions, Federal Circuit Court of Appeals decisions, Minnesota Statutes, Minnesota Rules (regulations), U.S. Code, Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Court Rules, Minnesota Supreme Court Rules, and international materials.

Source: Quicklaw America, Bethpage, NY, 800/387-0899; http://www.quicklawamerica.com.

INFOhio Implements SIRS Discoverer Deluxe

SIRS Mandarin, Inc. has announced that INFOhio, the information network for Ohio schools, has made the SIRS Discoverer Deluxe children's reference database available to all public and private school students and teachers for the 2000–2001 school year.

In addition to school use in classrooms, library/media centers, offices, and computer labs, INFOhio has licensed SIRS Discoverer Deluxe for home use by students and teachers. A user name and password, available from school librarians and technology coordinators, enable any student or teacher with home Internet access to continue using the reference database after school hours.

Source: SIRS Mandarin, Inc., Boca Raton, FL, 800/232-7477; http://www.sirs.com.

Questel•Orbit Launches PlusPat

Questel•Orbit, Inc. has announced the introduction of PlusPat, a new product covering more than 30 million worldwide patent documents. PlusPat is available through both Questel•Orbit's online and Internet services.

According to the announcement, PlusPat combines the European Patent Office's (EPO) worldwide collection with U.S. and Japanese patent information, resulting in the only service to offer merged European and U.S. classification systems to worldwide patents as far back as the 1920s.

PlusPat also offers the following:

- More than 30 million patent documents from 68 worldwide patenting authorities

- More than 9 million English-language abstracts summarizing the inventions

- The ability to perform detailed and extensive patent-family searches

Available only on ◯ Questel • Orbit

We are very pleased to announce a new international patent database. Simply enter FILE PLUSPAT to search the new file, designed by and available exclusively from Questel•Orbit.

The new PlusPat database merges the European Patent Office (EPO) DOCDB file, (which is the basis for EPO databases - including Espacenet), with information from additional Questel•Orbit databases.

The main features of PlusPat are

- Extensive coverage -- 68 countries and growing.
- Historical coverage -- some patent authorities start in the 1920s, Belgium (1926), France (1902), Germany (1877), Great Britain (1909), Netherlands (1912), Switzerland (1920), United States (1920), and Luxembourg (1946).
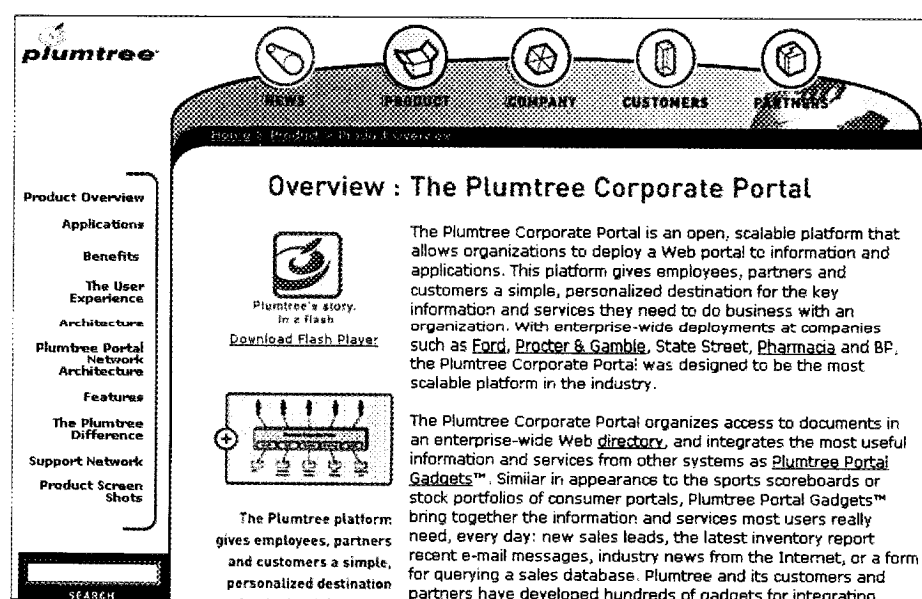
- The latest legal-status information

- Classification indexing for patent retrieval of documents going back to the early 20th century

"The well-known USPTO [United States Patent and Trademark Office], EPO, and International Patent classification systems are all provided in this file. In particular, the EPO classification allows users to conduct very accurate and comprehensive worldwide prior-art subject searches," said David Dickens, director of patents business at Questel•Orbit and manager of the PlusPat project. "Along with more than 9 million English abstracts, the subject-searching capabilities in this file are absolutely unique. These features provide great value to technology researchers and to intellectual-property professionals."

PlusPat records combine all the publication stages for a patent/publication, from unexamined application to the examined application and the granted patent, including the publication stage descriptions. PlusPat also has formats that display a summary of the patent/publication, giving users a concise way to look at the information.

Another PlusPat feature is the availability of ECLA (European patent CLAssification) coding. The ECLA codes are based on the IPC (International Patent Classification) codes but are more specific, with over 80,000 additional subdivisions,

Plumtree Software Introduces Corporate Portal 4.0

Plumtree Software, Inc. has announced the release of Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0, featuring the new Massively Parallel Portal Engine. According to the company, this engine processes user requests for corporate information and applications from a wide variety of computers in parallel, offering customers improvements in scalability, openness, and fault-tolerance.

Based on the new Plumtree Portal Network Architecture, the Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0 empowers a network of more than 100 customers, 25 technology alliance members, and 50 systems integrators to share information and services between portals and with other platforms and devices. The release also offers customers a new community-user experience and enterprisewide manageability for administrators, including lightweight directory access protocol (LDAP) support.

"Plumtree's synchronization with our LDAP directory of nearly 100,000 users allows us to bring new users online without creating a duplicate set of administrative processes," said Dan Gerbus, corporate project manager at Procter & Gamble. "In addition, major improvements to the user interface offer users the flexibility they have

Overview : The Plumtree Corporate Portal

been asking for. Features like multiple My-Pages and communities allow Procter & Gamble to design a portal that delivers information and applications in a much more efficient manner than version 3.0."

Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0 is powered by the Massively Parallel Portal Engine, a patent-pending technology for assembling information and services from other systems in parallel. The portal integrates these resources as Plumtree Portal Gadgets, distributed portal components that embed key information and services from enterprise applications and Internet sites. Designed to support global deployments with hundreds of thousands of users requesting information and services from thousands of sources, the Massively Parallel

Internet Insights

taken some effort to extract the last sentence from the article to produce such "summaries." The original Gale records don't include this nonsense.

The good news regarding content is that most of the tabular information is reproduced in the full-text records, although only in plain ASCII format. This is essential, for example, in an *Information Outlook* article about the salary of information specialists (http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m0FWE/11_3/57785862/p1/article.j html) that would be useless without the data. Illustrative materials, like photos, charts, and maps, however, are omitted. This is a common occurrence with most of the full-text services.

that whatever search you make the first information you see is a series of links urging you to buy from the sponsors whatever you typed in the query cell (see Figure 4).

The Software

The software should be refined for better search results. It allows the standard operators "+" for words that *must* appear, "-" for words that *must not* appear, and the double quotation marks for exact-phrase searching. Additional search options should be offered via pull-down menus as in HotBot, such as limiting the search terms to the title and/or the abstract. You may limit the search to a specific journal (if it's listed) or one of the subject categories. There's one potentially useful option not even mentioned in the help file, let alone understood by the developer. On the top and bottom of

Figure 4

The smart searcher, however, would know that when spotting in FindArticles .com a full-text article from the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*, for example, it's worth it to follow the link to the publisher's site. At the free and splendid BMJ site (http://www.bmj.com) there are HTML and Adobe PDF versions of the articles, along with extra information and services, like a function that alerts you when an item is added to the database that cites the current document. Similarly, it's helpful to know when encountering an article from *Discover* that at the publisher's site there may be a version with informative images, including charts, photos, and animation (http://www.discover.com/brainlab/brainlab.html).

To the credit of FindArticles.com, on the top of the records there are hotlinks to the journals' Web sites that can lead to a very efficient side trip. You'll also find a hotlink to Magazania.com if you feel the urge to subscribe to the magazine or journal. (This Minnesota-based company guarantees the lowest price on more than 1,000 journals.) Sometimes the link is wrong and yields the beloved File Not Found message, as was the case with the journal *Geo Info Systems*, which changed its title to *Geospatial Solutions* and moved to a new Web location. There are ad banners on the page but they aren't too obtrusive, and, except for the animated ones, they're bearable for a free service. It's inane, however,

the screens the descriptors assigned to the article by Gale Group indexers appear as hotlinked elements with the note "terms related to the article." Many are fine precoordinated descriptors, such as Banking Industry/Data Processing, but instead of searching them like that (yielding 39 relevant hits in this example), the software generates an "OR" search and finds 540,036 articles. I hope someone at FindArticles.com reads this. (You're welcome, it's my pleasure.)

FindArticles.com strengthens the trend of new information service providers that are licensing content from traditional players and making it available—in combination with other content—at a much better price or, as in this case, for free. LookSmart deserves praise for launching this service, but it could look smarter if it consulted with a competent librarian who could enlighten them about the overlaps and gaps in some journals' coverage, the omission of some journals (like *Computers in Libraries*), or about the beauty of efficient descriptor searching.

Péter Jacsó is associate professor of library and information science at the University of Hawaii's Department of Information and Computer Sciences, and a columnist for Information Today. *His e-mail address is jacso@hawaii.edu.*

Questel•Orbit

and are updated monthly and retrospectively applied.

PlusPat's patent-family search capability, including the legal status information and the family-equivalents data, allows a family command to be performed against a set of records. In addition to the existing family-results display, PlusPat merges all of the related family equivalents into one record. The new, family search and display command MFAM (Merged Family) is currently under development and will be available later this year.

All existing Questel•Orbit searching capabilities and display features are also available within PlusPat, including the following:

- Comprehensive data ranging
- Standardized patent data
- Family searching
- Statistical analysis tools
- Cross-file searching
- Patent grouping and de-duplication
- Legal and full-text display features

Source: Questel•Orbit, Inc., McLean, VA, 703/442-0900; http://www.questelorbit.com.

Plumtree Software

Portal Engine integrates gadgets operating on separate computers, which simultaneously prepare information or services to embed in each user's portal page.

"Massively parallel portals will become a requirement for large organizations seeking to scale access to their critical applications while maintaining performance," said Thomas Koulopoulos, president of Delphi Group. "The Plumtree Portal Network Architecture is ideal for the increasingly demanding distributed enterprise and business-to-business applications that today's portal solutions are being built for."

The Massively Parallel Portal Engine communicates with gadgets on computers separate from the main portal server via HyperText Transfer Protocol (http). To support interactive gadgets, Plumtree has developed a unique approach for embedding gadget commands in http headers, which brokers dynamic Web services between gadgets and the main portal server. Processing gadgets on separate computers precludes them from interfering with the main portal server and with one another, isolating slow-running or faulty gadgets to improve scalability and reliability.

The Internet-based architecture of this release allows the customers and partners in the Plumtree Portal Network to share portal resources with one another, and with other businesses, platforms, and devices. This architecture, known as the Plumtree Portal Network Architecture, connects customers and partners using the following technologies:

- Hosted Gadgets give users the ability to share information and services between portal deployments

- Syndicated Gadgets allow users to distribute gadget content to other businesses, platforms, and devices

- Networked Search offers customers the ability to search other portal deployments and other search indexes

These technologies allow separate business units within a company and separate businesses within an industry to work closely together.

Because the portal communicates with gadgets via Internet standards, Plumtree's customers and partners can host gadgets on the Internet that are available to other customers, or to the entire Plumtree Portal Network. As a result, each new customer

can draw on a set of shared services and distribute its own resources to a broad range of businesses in the network. Moreover, by hosting gadgets, Plumtree partners can contribute electronic services to any Plumtree deployment without requiring customers to install the associated software. The same technology allows customers to share resources between portal deployments within a large organization, supporting global scalability.

The Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0 also features networked search—the ability to search other portals in the Plumtree Portal Network in parallel and, through the development of plug-in search components, other search indexes available on local networks and the Internet. With this capability, Plumtree Corporate Portal users can access in one search all the documents in their own portal, an Autonomy document index, a portal deployed in another department, and Google's index of Internet content. As a result, companies can incorporate external sources of information into an expansive virtual knowledge base.

In addition, this new release includes a new, extensible security scheme, with the ability to synchronize user and group affiliations from a wide variety of user directories via plug-in components known as Plumtree Authentication Providers. Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0 also offers automatic security mirroring to match the security of documents in the portal index to that of the original documents, easing maintenance for large-scale deployments.

"Our mission is to bring together all of a business' electronic assets and to project those to a broader audience than has traditionally been able to benefit from computers," said John Kunze, Plumtree's CEO. "The Plumtree Corporate Portal 4.0's Massively Parallel Portal Engine can assemble resources quickly and reliably, and the network creates a vast pool of resources from which each deployment can draw."

Source: Plumtree Software, Inc., San Francisco, 415/263-8900; http://www.plumtree.com.