

CCL-EAR Committee Review
Facts on File Online Resources
September, 2000

The California Community College Libraries, Electronic Access to Information Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of Facts On File's collections of online resources.

Facts On File's online resources are currently divided into two ranges of products: comprehensive On-Line Encyclopedic Databases and the On-File(tm) On-line Databases, based upon the On-File print binders. A wide variety of topics is covered, with a special emphasis in the areas of Science and History. The databases offer thousands of definitions, key documents, biographies, photographs and other images, charts, graphs, maps, and timelines. Databases may be licensed individually or as an entire collection. In addition, Science Online offers four encyclopedic databases in one package.

Each CCL-EAR committee member independently, or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staff, reviewed and evaluated NewsBank InfoWeb. Assessments were submitted on a Review Reply Form specifically designed by the Committee for this purpose. Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member only and not transferred to another. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the proposal to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Attributes of the information resource were assessed on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing the "least value" and 4 representing the "most value". The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

SEARCH INTERFACE

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

USER SUPPORT SERVICES

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone helpline available?

COST

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

#1 --- No Support

#2 --- No Support at this time. Future support conditional upon enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 --- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to Community College campuses for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below in Comments Section.

#4 --- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to Community College campuses for their acceptance or rejection.

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review as well as comments taken from the individual Review Reply Forms:

INFORMATION DATABASE - 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 2

Facts on File Online Databases provides a variety of encyclopedias and visual reference materials across a broad spectrum of subjects. The offerings are particularly strong in the sciences, but also offer a number of resources in the social sciences. The resources include a multitude of charts, graphs, and visual resources which would be particularly useful in curriculum development and as lecture tools. There are links to related essays and diagrams, and selective but valid links to other websites. However, most of the information is aimed at the high school or middle school level, and not particularly appropriate for college level work. In addition, much of the information is available in other resources on the web or in other periodical databases. For example, the information in the Career Guidance database is also available in the Occupational Outlook Handbook online. Maps are readily available at numerous websites. The images that are available in such databases as the American Indian database are not sufficiently large nor do they have adequate caption information to make them very useful. --/--

This product is actually comprised of 23 different databases, 9 are "encyclopedic" relating to specific disciplines such as science and topics such as African-American History & Culture or American Women's History. Because there is such variation in the content and subject coverage it is very difficult to generalize about Facts On File's web products. My feeling was that it is primarily composed of text publications that have been reformatted for the web without thinking about and utilizing the advantages

that a web version has. The tiered directory structure may make it useful for the student groping for a topic and is probably necessary to help the user to identify what useful information is included in these very specific and limited databases. Much of the content (especially the On-line products) is more appropriate to high school or elementary school students and is available from other sources, both print and online. I was not able to ascertain whether these will be updated and if so, how frequently. -----

The encyclopedic databases are better suited to community college students, although it is difficult to generalize even here. Some have very specific custom search interfaces limited to drop down boxes containing the time lines and topics contained in the database. Others have only a key word search combined with lists of topics. More consistency would be appropriate if this set of databases is to be packaged as a whole. Some of the individual databases may be of interest to particular institutions because of specific curriculum; however, I do not see these as particularly well suited to community college students. -----

I have some concerns over the indexing of the products. At first glance the search for biographies of scientists by discipline appeared to meet the needs of a current assignment at our college. Unfortunately, a "relative" or "exact" search for mathematicians returned 3 results, however the same search for mathematician returned 15. This will clearly make it difficult for students to know if they have found all the information available. -----

The "On-line" products all require Adobe Acrobat and are very static with downloaded black and white pages. The content is definitely more appropriate to K through 12 education. --/-- Within Facts on File there are many different products to choose from. I'm breaking them down into two general categories: online encyclopedias and their "On File" products. -----

The online encyclopedias are Science On-Line, American Historical Images, African-American History & Culture, American Indian History & Culture, and World Atlas On-Line. These resources provide more comprehensive information than the On-File resources and they do not use PDF files extensively like the On-File products. -----Of the encyclopedias, I feel the Science On-Line was the best product. Like all the Facts on File products information is succinct and easy to understand. There wasn't a heavy use of jargon or technical terminology. This is perfect for it's target audience. All the major fields in the sciences are represented. Information in the encyclopedia was broken down into logical categories. I was able to find a diagram and a definition of a shield volcano, plus a comparison between a shield volcano and a composite volcano. ----- I found the American Indian History and Culture and the World Atlas products to be deficient. The American Indian History and Culture has a very limited content. I was unable to find information concerning several tribes here in California, including the Ohlone and the Wiyot in Northern California. What information I did find was too brief. ----- The World Atlas maps lack detail. The primary reason to look at an atlas is for details in a visual format about countries or the physical environment. The supporting statistical data about countries was very good. -----

Now for the On-File products, these are the same as the printed product only scanned into a digital format. I found the use of PDF files to be a barrier and hampered the products functionality. In PDF format, the information is much harder to view and manipulate. The scope of these products is very

limited. In Comparative Religions On-File under "Development and Groups", I looked at "Christianity-Main Denominations". It listed the Nestorian Church. I could not find any supporting information defining this Church. Another example of the limited scope in World History On-File there was no information about Armenia or the Armenian genocide. -----

Overall, the Facts on File products seem to be geared towards high-school level students. The information is brief and general and many times the scope is severely limited. The coverage (retrospective and current) for all the products is excellent. These databases could be useful to Community Colleges as a replacement for printed Fact on File products. --/--

Facts on File online databases include a collection of online encyclopedias and the On File(tm) series. I like the variety of databases that are offered, particularly the multicultural databases, and the fact that you have the option of purchasing the entire collection or selecting the databases that are most useful for your campus. I'm disappointed that many of the databases are only updated annually; I expect an online database to be updated more frequently. ----- I found that many of the encyclopedias included biographies, pictures, historical documents, time lines and charts that enriched the content and were fun to browse. Some of the statistical charts are a few years out of date, but the charts and summaries made the statistics easy to interpret. The articles were usually quite short (under a page) and relied on the use of hypertext links to create more subject depth. Where web links existed, they were very well chosen for authority and interest. -----

The Forms on File(tm) database fills a unique niche. It has little relevance to academic subjects and probably would be more heavily used at a public library. However, even in academia one has to tend to the business of life and this database puts all sorts of forms together in one place. -----

The On File(tm) series is good for basic handouts, but it seems to be geared for a younger audience. I also wish there was an option to choose between viewing the documents in html or pdf. Right now pdf is the only option so Adobe Acrobat must be installed. Also, I'm not sure if assistive technology works well with pdf format. --/--

Facts on File is an interdisciplinary, interactive set of databases that cover a wide range of subjects. Facts on File has always been an excellent resource for students and a credible source of information. The On-line Encyclopedias provide a collection of historical and current information. Most are updated annually with the Landmark Documents of American History being updated quarterly. Images, charts and graphs are available within each Online Encyclopedia Database. Links to additional web sites are included directing the user to additional web information. The contents section is fully hyperlinked and includes a timeline, biographies, subject entries, a gallery of photographs and images, primary source documents, maps, charts, and tables, and a list of web links selected by Facts On File editors ----- The On Files section includes 16 additional databases which can be viewed using a free version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. This section provides information on many different subjects from history, government, geography and religion. -----

The contents from the On-Line Encyclopedia and most of the On Files On-Line Databases are of value to

students within the California community colleges. --/--

The core databases combined with the encyclopedias and the more focused subject databases offer broad and very useful coverage to the unskilled researcher and to the more accomplished one searching for a nice overview of a subject. The database would be an excellent source for the distance learner. Most of searches resulted in excellent information. The links to other sites were clearly marked and self-explanatory. The databases cover full text articles with relevant maps, overview of key issues, and many historical documents. The clear directions for linking from feature to feature will be a real plus for the distance learner. --/--

Subject categories include: Science, history, multicultural, religion, geography, sports, career guidance and forms. The content of information varies from database to database. Within the subject category Science, there are several options: 1) Science Online; 2) On-Line Genetics and Cell Biology; 3) Historical Inventions; 4) Historical Science Experiments; 5) Science Experiments; and 6) Science Projects for All Students. Science Online includes four encyclopedias for anatomy and physiology, earth sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences. By fall 2000, new and expanded subjects for marine science, botany, weather, astronomy, space and new experiments will be added. -----

Search results for the phrase, relative "human genome" on Life Sciences in Science Online, Life Sciences include the following: 0 diagrams; 4 definitions (e.g., biology, Escherichia, virus and genetics); 1 biography on Watson, James Dewey; and 3 essays on biology, phages, and The Technology of Healing: A Century of Medicines. Repeating the above search as an exact match returned almost identical results. The definition of biology contains human genome, which is highlighted in red and states, "an international Human Genome Project attempts to map the entire genetic code contained in the 23 pairs of human chromosomes." Crick is included in the essay along with Watson. You can hyperlink to a biography on Crick. The Crick biography is not included in the search results for keyword or phrase "human genome" because the Crick biography does not contain the keyword "human genome." When the topic and definition of "human genome" is added the content will be better. Facts On File's Science includes Web Links to biology, physical sciences, earth sciences, and science history. These Web sites aim to place the "contents of your Facts On File on-line database into a broader context." Ideally, the Web links should appear in the search results. Web sites examples are An Overview of the Solar System, Blazing a Genetic Trail, and The Biology Project. Science Online offers general information appropriate for community college students. However, the audience for the other Science databases is 4-12 or 9-12. --

-----FEATURES: The quality of information presented is adequate, but it is scanty in providing key definitions, and broader coverage on the topics are missing (e.g., human genome). The fact that the database has not been updated since 1999 may offer a partial explanation. The Science databases consist of some modifications to the Facts On File print source, and additional material from Hellicon, a UK publisher, provides a series of entries. According to Kirsten Wheaton, Project Manager for Science OnLine, Facts on File is using Hellicon in areas where they do not have print material. Also, Wheaton stated that they are in the process of adding 33,000 definitions and topics to Science Online and expect to complete this by March 2001. -----The retrospective coverage varies from History Databases (e.g., from 1492-present) and Multicultural Databases (from slave trade through civil rights movement to present day. It is unclear what the retrospective coverage is for Science, Career, and Geography. The

currency is updated annually for most of the databases and quarterly for only one of the History Databases, Landmark Documents in American History. According to Wheaton, Facts On File plans to update biannually in the future. -----2 The information needs to be more current and updated more frequently. American Women and American Indian include bibliographies under a new feature, "Further Information Resources". Wheaton indicated that Facts OnLine plans to include bibliographies for other databases in the future. --//--

SEARCH INTERFACE - 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 2

The Facts on File search interface is functional, but not great. Various options are provided; users can search the entire single database by keyword or can search by format or information type (diagram, definition, etc.). A search can be customized to an exact or relative match if one is using multiple search terms. One can use a subject tree approach and progressively refine one's search by large category, e.g. animal anatomy, human physiology, life sciences, etc. Users may also select by a topic, which is an alphabetic list of topics or diagrams by title. There does not appear to be any Boolean search options. There are numerous links and cross-references within an individual database. There is, however, no mechanism for searching across databases, which might be useful given the similarity in some of the database offerings. When records are retrieved, search terms are highlighted, making it easy for the user to identify his subject. Many of the results in the databases are retrieved in Adobe Acrobat which must be available and functional. --//--

The interface is generally straightforward and easy to use, although individual variations in each database may be frustrating for the student who tries to move from one to another. In many cases the directory structure of these databases is rather cumbersome and search options limited. On the positive side, the very structured custom searches point out to the user what information IS available and prove helpful in limiting the "Zero Search Results" response. Only limited key word searches are provided and true Boolean searching is not an option. -----

The structured searches may have another positive aspect in that they maybe helpful for students who are familiar with the database to quickly locate diagrams, biographies or charts. However, I was disappointed in the quality of the illustrations. Most graphics are in black and white and do not have the interactivity usually expected on the web. Maps are very basic with minimal topographic features and only major cities included. The inclusion of vital statistics in the World Atlas On-line is good, however some are dated. -----

More navigational devices are needed. In most cases the back button is the only option and it is inconvenient to have to use it to access the results list repeatedly. The means of returning to the database list should also be more visible than the current small bracketed [Back to Available Databases] note. It appears that the frames version is the only one available, thus limiting accessibility for many disabled users. In addition, if frames are to be used, they could be used more effectively to avoid some of the navigational limitations of the current interface. --//--

I found the interface design easy to use and intuitive. The indexing is the products shortcoming. Many

times I got zero results from the keyword search. For instance, in American Indian History and Culture a larger keyword index with variant tribal name spelling would be useful. The subject index was also small and inadequate. If you select to browse a letter from the "A to Z index search", one must scroll through pages and pages to get to the desired subject entry. The search interface is hindered by the use of PDF files. The user must jump back and forth between Adobe Acrobat Reader and their Internet browser. --/--

The design of the database is visually appealing. The colors and fonts chosen are restrained and elegant. There is no competition between the content and the presentation of the material. -----

There is no global way to search the entire database(s). The user must first make a choice from among eight subject categories. It is possible, of course, for the user to choose a subject category that produces less relevant results and yields fewer hits. Several databases would need to be searched when the user is looking for information on a subject that is interdisciplinary in nature and doesn't fit neatly into just one category, for example, if the user wanted information on Chinese-American women. Once a category is chosen there is no way to search the entire category to determine to determine which database to use. ----
--- The search feature is difficult to compare because it varied, depending on which database you are searching. Some had a search box in the left-hand menu and others you had to click a link to get to a search box. Several offered the user a choice from among three different ways to search: by Table of Contents, by keyword, or by A to Z index. It took me a while to find the difference between a relative and exact match keyword search (relative is the same as a Boolean AND and the exact match is a phrase search). If the database has a keyword search function, it will accept truncation using *, in the relative search mode. -----

The use of frames takes up much of the screen and it doesn't help much with navigation. Navigation is definitely a problem. After you do a search and view a document from your results, you must use the back button to get back to your result list. Sometimes the back button just moved the scroll bar up to the top of the article. Using the back button for navigation in Internet Explorer often produced the message that the page had expired. The refresh button would bump back to the opening screen and it was necessary to recreate the search. I didn't find a "back to results" link in most of the databases. -----

A very nice feature is the search summary that appears at the top of the result list. It includes the search terms and the method used to get the result list and it breaks down the often lengthy results list into links arranged by category: subject entries, biographies, images, etc. -----

From what I can tell it is not possible to Email an article or graphic using the send function. I was able to send the URL of an article to a colleague but when she attempted to use the link, the Facts on File(tm) database opened into the general category I had been using rather than the specific article. She was able to use the database to do searches at that point, but it doesn't seem possible to Email specific articles. I was not able to download an article to disc in either text or html format. The maps and articles print well from the either browser's print button or from Adobe Acrobat. --/--

The search interface was uncluttered and used a frame set on the left side to allow users to select a

subject area or method of searching. The On-File databases allow the user to search either the index by keyword or browse an alphabetical listing of subjects. You also had the choice of selecting a table of contents listing. In order to search by keyword you must select a content area. One limitation is that you can't select more than one content area at a time using the On-File databases. ----- The On-Line Encyclopedia databases allow additional levels of searching. They include a topic menu, selecting by era, searching by year, or title and keyword searching within all the sections of the database. You can also list and view all the contents from each section. The American Indian History and Culture encyclopedia includes searching by tribe or region. You can search more than one topic area using the On-Line Encyclopedias -----

Users can print, or copy and save the information using their web browser. -----The interface was easy to navigate and find information and requires a minimal effort to learn how to use effectively. It was intuitive and an excessive amount of training was not required. -----

The ability to select a text only version of the search interface without the use of frames would be helpful for users accessing the product with screen reading software. ----- Adding the ability to perform field searching or proximity operators would improve the search interface. The addition of being able to e-mail from within the database would also improve the features of this product. --/--

The search interface is quite clearly navigated. The links are easy to understand and decipher for the unskilled user. The listings are in chronological order with the most current ones on top. The advanced search offers truncation and Boolean searching. There are a wide variety of options available to the student and they are well marked and self explanatory. --/--

The functionality and ease of use of the interface is not easy. It is complex and perplexing and the directions on how to use the database are not simple. If you search the entire database, you are given a choice of an exact match or relative match for keyword or phrase. You can also search by subject (e.g., animal anatomy, human anatomy, and life sciences). To do a topic or concept search, you must go to diagrams; then you can search by topic or concept. You are given the entire list of topics without the opportunity to select from an alphabetized index at the top. The search experience would be easier if all options were included on one page. The search capabilities do not include full Boolean, truncation, RW, simple & advanced search modes. You cannot limit by date, field or format. The Facts on File representative stated that they wanted to keep it simple. --/--

USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 2, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 2

User support is minimal. There is no help screen at all on the initial database selection screen, but this screen is simple to understand. At other points in the search process, the help screens are generic--not context-sensitive, and provide useful but not particularly extensive information. There is a link to download Adobe Acrobat on the main screen for each database that requires it, but it is not clear from the outset that this will be required until one is in the middle of the process. There is help available for problems downloading and using Adobe Acrobat. Contact information in the form of an 800 phone number and an e-mail address are readily apparent on the initial screen. --/--

A message left with technical support was returned within an hour with a very helpful response. -----
These databases are fairly easy to use, however more "help" would really be useful. There is no in
context help and the "help" documents are minimal. For the encyclopedic databases they do address the
types of searches, however the "On-line" product "help" primarily deals with Adobe Acrobat and how to
work with pdf files. -----Facts On File does support remote access using a referring URL, something we
and our students really appreciate. The also support the use of a proxy server. --/--

The online help offered is general and generic. It is not case sensitive. No matter where I was in the
database, every time I would go to " help" it would take me to the beginning of the help file. -----There
is telephone and e-mail technical support. However, there were no hours given for the telephone support.
I have no idea when to call to speak to a live person. --/--

Once again, the online help seemed to vary depending on the database. The On File(tm) series had a lot
of help information for problems with Adobe Acrobat, but not much help on how to search. Some of the
other databases have more search help, but it doesn't appear to be context sensitive and you need to do
some scrolling to find what you need. A "contact us" link is available with an 800 number and e-mail
address but the company operates on Eastern Standard Time. --/--

Facts On File has clearly written online documentation that explains contents, features and capabilities.
Documentation is available online through a "Contact Us" and "Help" link at the bottom of the left-hand
side frame. The amount of detail included in the "help screens" is more than adequate. A telephone
number is provided for daytime help, Monday through Friday. Unfortunately I was directed to an
answering machine both times I called for technical support. --/--

Help screen are available and easy to understand on all of the databases. Technical support is available
by phone and e-mail during normal business hours-EST. --/--

Accessing Help from the left-side Menu, which includes several options(e.g., available databases, search
the entire database and Web Links), you link to a Welcome to Science On-Line page that includes the
following statement at the top "click here to go directly to instructions for using the database." The
instructions are dense and complicated, and I doubt that many students will devote the time and energy
to read the directions. There is too much text. I discovered how to search by searching a topic before I
read the instructions. Once you realize how to do one search, you discover it is possible to search by
diagram, topic, definitions, or biographies and the overall functionality of the database becomes
apparent. Help and instructions should be improved to be more user friendly. Telephone help line is
available only for subscribers, and there is an e-mail address listed. You may also send questions for
technical assistance via e-mail. I did contact Sara Anunciacao, listed for further inquiries who referred
me to Kirsten Wheaton, Project Manager who was knowledgeable and helpful. --/--

COST: 2, 1, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3

Facts on File provides multiple subscription options. Each database can be purchased individually or a

library can purchase all databases at a significant reduction. Libraries purchasing multiple databases should carefully consider the package price, as individual prices will quickly add up to be more than the package price. Prices include unlimited usage with remote access for students and faculty. ----- The price for these databases seems high to me, particularly given the amount and the level of information required by our students. Much of this information is available elsewhere for free on the web or in other online resources. I would find it hard to justify the purchase price for the entire package for a community college library, though there maybe individual databases that would find heavy use in particular situations. --/--

The cost seems quite high for the quantity and quality of information, the minimal search capabilities, the less than satisfactory help and accessibility. While the bundled cost is a great improvement, it still is providing us with a majority of pdf format databases that will have little use. --/--

The cost seems comparable to other products reviewed --/--

The cost seems to be fair for unlimited use and remote access. --/--

The cost does seem reasonable for this package, what is also attractive is the ability to select specific Encyclopedia databases or On File subject databases without having to purchase the entire collection. The entire Facts on File collection may not be appropriate for every campus. The pricing does include unlimited usage. --/--

The cost is high but the databases do attempt to fill the large gap between what is available to the user in the reference section of the library and what is needed at a remote site. The hardcover cost of reference books keeps getting more expensive and thus making the price of the online seem more reasonable. --/--

Yes, it appears reasonable when you compare it to CQ Researcher. I think the content and ease of use of CQ Researcher is superior. Facts On File appears to be developing a product that will offer more depth than the Gale databases.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 1, 3, 2, 3, 3, 2

Access was trouble-free from our campus workstations. Access was slower from my home computer; the use of frames exacerbated this problem. In addition, my particular home computer has difficulty with Adobe Acrobat,so this was problematic in several of the databases. Whenever additional software is required to use a resource, even a "standard"such as Acrobat, vendors will limit certain segments of the user population.--/--

There are some serious difficulties with access. The speed is can be excruciatingly slow. Some parts of the database don't consistently load properly. In my first access of the American Historical Images database,the Timeliness for Native Societies and Colonization actually included the period 11000 B.C through 1100 A.D. and immediately ran into 1950. At the second access all appeared correctly, however, many of our students might not realize the difference in less dramatic loading errors. There were

frequent error messages "Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80004005' [Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][Named Pipes] Invalid connection./subscription/active_database_list.asp, line 111". On occasion Career Guidance Online would not allow a return to the database list. In Historical Inventions On File, the first in the list of contents for Communications, Milestones in Communications retrieves a "404 file not found" message. All in all there were too many problems with access, speed and reliability.--/--

The response time for all the databases was very good. I did experience problems with the connection. I received the same error message four times during my session. The message was:Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80004005' [Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][Named Pipes]Invalid connection. /Subscription/Product_List.asp, line 40. After a few minutes, I would be able to resume my searching. --/--

The response time was good, but I got error messages (Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80004005'), when using Netscape as the browser, in several different databases on three different days. I'm not sure if this is a problem on my end or theirs, but I've never seen that error before in any of our other products. Once I got that message I was kicked out and the browser shut down. I had to log back in to the service and sometimes I had to try several times to get back in. I also got a few Javascript error messages. ----- The databases performed much better when I used Internet Explorer as the browser - the driver error and Javascript error messages stopped. However,using the back button for navigation in Internet Explorer often produced the message that the page had expired. The refresh button would bump back to the opening screen and it was necessary to recreate the search. --/--

Response time was excellent. I had no problems accessing this product.--/--

The access was fast and reliable. We never had problems logging on and connecting. --/--

I had some difficulty opening life science subject. I received a message stating, "Script timed out. The maximum amount of time for a script to execute was exceeded. You can change this limit by specifying a new value for the property server script time out or by changing the value in the IIS tools." A second time I got another notice of invalid connection, "Microsoft ODBC SQL service driver (Named Pipes) invalid connection." My computer froze on several occasions from difficulties with the search engine. According to Kirsten Wheaton, these problems can be corrected.--/--

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: 2, 1, 3, 3, 3, 2, -

The addition of one or more of these resources would expand access to traditionally print resources to remote users in an organized and searchable format. However, the level of information included in these databases is not particularly appropriate to community college users in general. There are undoubtedly exceptions to this statement; individual colleges may find certain databases particularly useful. The Forms On File database has broad applications not easy to find elsewhere in a convenient form. But in general, much of the information can be found elsewhere.--/--

Overall these databases may have some interest to individual institutions, however, I do not think there would be enough use, system wide, to make a proposal worthwhile. Much of the content is not appropriate for community college students, and indexing, graphics and accessibility are not up to par.--
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The encyclopedic databases would be very useful. I would like to see more frequent updates, better navigation and a better search interface. (Note: If other campuses experience the same error messages I would change my rating to a 2). --/--

I think we should offer it consortially to all Community College libraries given the large amount of content and simple navigation of the database. ----- Adding the ability to perform field searching or proximity operators would improve the search interface. The addition of being able to e-mail from within the database would also improve the features of this product. -----The ability to select a text only version of the search interface without the use of frames would be helpful for users accessing the product with screen reading software. --/--

The real value to the community colleges would be from the other sites. Our distance learners would really benefit from this product. Until there is remote access, I cannot endorse this product at this high of a cost. --/--

UTILITY FOR HOME CAMPUS: 2, 1, 2, 2, 3, 2, 2

Given the high cost of the total package and the availability of information elsewhere, I would not be likely to purchase the total package of databases. I would look very carefully at a couple of the individual databases that would enhance our collection of online resources available for remote access. --
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I would not be interested in these databases for my home campus. The content is not appropriate and access is too problematic --/--

I'm concerned about the error messages and I wonder if anyone else encountered them. I found the messages to be very frustrating. If I didn't get the error messages, my rating would be a 3 because I think with a few improvements this could be a popular product. --/--

Facts on File would be useful on my campus. We currently don't subscribe to the print or CD-ROM version of the product. I would recommend the Science Online and some of the History databases for my library to consider. --/--

The cost without the remote access is too high. It is a good product and I hope to see it used in the future. --/--

If Facts on File content was more comprehensive, the currency updated more frequently, and the functionality and ease of use simpler, I would be interested in the databases. It is a work in progress and

may improve. Facts On File debuted March 2000 and is evolving. Many of the databases are currently more appropriate for grades 4-12. With additional entries, including definitions and topics and Further Information Resources with bibliographies the content will improve.

Last Updated: February 26, 2002