CCL-EAR Committee Review
Of ProQuest Bundle
Fall 2004

Selected members of the California Community College Libraries, Electronic Access to Information Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) during the spring of 2004 undertook a "hands-on" study of the ProQuest Bundle online database package.

The ProQuest package includes the following products: ERIC plus text, ProQuest Biology Journals, ProQuest Health and Medical Complete, ProQuest Psychology Journals, and ProQuest 5000. ProQuest 5000 includes ABI Inform, Accounting and Tax, Banking Information Source, Business Dateline, Career and Technical Education, Pharmaceutical News, ProQuest Education Journals, ProQuest European Business, ProQuest Newspapers, ProQuest Religion, ProQuest Telecommunications, and Research Library Complete.

REVIEW PROCESS

Selected members of the CCL-EAR committee, independently or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staffs, reviewed and evaluated the Proquest Bundle. Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee(s) only and not transferred to others. 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 is needed? Is a telephone help line available?

COST
If cost is available, does it seem reason in terms of comparable products/

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

OVERALL ASSESMENT
#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 California Community College
    libraries 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 California
    Community College campus libraries for their acceptance or rejection.

Information Database 3, 3, 3, 3

*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.*

There are several premier databases included in the bundle. These are Proquest
Biology Journals, Proquest Psychology Journals, Research Library, Proquest
Newsstand, Proquest Newspapers, Proquest Health & Medical Complete, Career and
Technical Education, and ABI/INFORM Global. These databases all had excellent
amounts of full-text titles.

There are several databases that fell into a second tier either because they didn't have
core journals available in full-text or had an average amount of full-text articles available.
These databases (Banking Information Source, Business Dateline, Proquest Computing,
Proquest Educational Journals, Proquest Telecommunications, Wilson Educational
Abstracts) are part of Proquest 5000. These databases contribute to Proquest 5000
having only 56% of titles in full-text.

The third tier of databases includes Proquest Religion, Accounting & Tax , Accounting &
Tax Periodicals, Pharmaceutical News Index, Proquest Asian Business, Proquest
European Business, and ERIC plus Text, databases which some community colleges
would not subscribe to if they were offered separately. Part of Proquest 5000, Proquest
Religion, Proquest Asian Business, and Proquest European Business fall outside the
core research areas of most community colleges.   Also part of Proquest 5000,
Accounting & Tax , Accounting & Tax Periodicals and Pharmaceutical News Index have
a less than desirable amount of full-text articles available. Finally, ERIC plus text was a
little misleading. The database includes indexing for ERIC Documents (ED) and ERIC
Journals (EJ), with links to the full-text of over 250 journals. But also includes links to
ERIC document articles, full text available only if the user is willing to pay for them.
Fortunately, colleges that do not have access to the ERIC Documents collection can opt
to show only the journal indexing.

The Proquest "bundle" offers access to a substantial number of resources across the
curriculum, with business and newspaper coverage especially strong. Like other
products from multi-database vendors, there are overlaps in content. For example,

close to 25% of the full-text titles in ABI Inform are also available in Research Library. 77 of the 185 full-text titles in the Biology database are also available in Proquest 5000. Within Proquest 5000, some of the specialized databases offer little to community college students. The Accounting and Tax database contains a sizable number of outdated publications among its 2100 titles including "Federal Withholding tax tables" no later than 1997, and "FAS 109: Newest accounting for income taxes" from 1992. The Pharmaceutical News Index includes 20 titles, only one of which contains current full-text information. Several of the titles indexed are specialized newsletters with subscription costs of over $1200 each.

Proquest Newspapers offers regional, national, and international full-text coverage and includes such standards as the New York Times (1999-present), Washington Post (1987-present), Los Angeles Times (1985-present), the Times (London) (1992-present), and the Wall Street Journal (1984-present). California newspapers are well-represented with full text content of the San Francisco Chronicle, (1985-present), the San Diego Union Tribune (2000-present), the Press-Democrat (1994-present), the Orange County Register (1986-present), and the Daily News (Los Angeles) (1995-present).   Local newspapers are not as well represented; there are some titles, but not current issues. For example, the San Mateo Times (1991-1997), and the Santa Cruz Sentinel (1992-1997). Of the 562 titles included, 292 have current, full-text coverage. Many titles have no content later than 1997.

ProQuest contains ABI-Inform, an extensive business database with its selection of journals, magazines, and trade publications. Coverage goes deep, back to 1971. With the other business databases, the student has a thorough set of business resources to search. The ABI Inform database includes "IntelliDocs", which are company reports from Hoover's Online that include financial information, company history, competitors, etc. They are now embedded in the abstract and article text, and do not show up on their own in the search results, nor is there an option to search IntelliDocs from the ProQuest menu bar.

The ProQuest Bundle contains full text from some peer-reviewed journals, however it should be pointed out that unlike its competitors, the percentage of peer-reviewed content is significantly smaller, not only by number of titles, but also when it comes to backfiles, many titles not available before the 1990's. At the same time, there is a smaller percentage of embargoed titles compared to their competitors, however it should be noted that often the embargoed full text titles that occur in ProQuest's competitors, do not appear in full text at all in ProQuest
ProQuest has unique academic titles coming from major publishers such as Kluwer, the American Sociological Association and the American Anthropological Association, but while ProQuest has tended to boast that they have a significant portion of the 5% most often cited journals, the lack of full text titles coming from major publishers such as Academic Press, Routledge, and Blackwell, are telling. Granted, in the first two years' of higher education the search for particular peer-reviewed journal titles is not as important, still ProQuest does contain fewer titles and smaller backfiles versus some of its competitors.

Overall, this package contains a wide breadth of material. A review of the title lists shows that most of the scholarly titles mainly come from the ProQuest Research Library package. Search results when searching all databases in ProQuest 5000, will often lead to a flood of mostly business and newspaper titles (though if a student clicks on the

"Scholarly Journals " tab, the ProQuest Research Library scholarly journals will show up by themselves).

The site is updated daily. Often complete articles are online within 48 hours of hardcopy delivery.

SEARCH INTERFACE   3, 4, 3, 3

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?

The Proquest search interface is easy to use and offers a variety of search options and limiters. There are a number of ways to search the collection including: Topic Finder, Browse Lists, and Advanced Search.

The Basic Search screen is uncluttered and clearly provides the most-used limit options (full-text, and peer reviewed). A "more search options" tab opens additional choices including sort options (most recent or most relevant) and an extensive list of article type limiters (review, editorial, interview, etc.). The greatest downside to the search interface is the type of search conducted by default. Proquest uses phrase searching for search strings with two terms. To conduct a keyword search with two terms one must supply the Boolean operators. For search strings of three or more Proquest uses proximity searching. Many students are not comfortable with phrase searching. They are taught to select keywords from their topic or thesis statements and use those keywords to conduct their research. By having phrase searching as the default students routinely receive zero or few useful results. Hopefully, the administrative settings can allow the librarian to choose to change the default searching options.

The advanced search method is designed with pull down menus to help the user create a Boolean expression. The interface is simple to use and has the identical limiters as listed on the basic search screen. Advanced search offers fielded searching and additional limiters such as NAICS code and company name.

The Publication search method is straightforward. One can use this search method to find the titles of journals index in the database.

The final search method is topic guide. This is a useful new feature to the search interface. It provides a topical subject index to students. Students can either browse the index alphabetically or search for a topic by keyword.

The online help is very complete and furnishes full explanations of options and links, but the user must access it by using the icons at the top of the screen. Many of the icons have very helpful dropdown choices. This might not be obvious to a beginning student. The Features such as the Natural language and Topic Finder are best used by trying them and comparing the results for relevancy search by search. The help screens are very detailed and useful and will guide one through each of the links and options.

The results list contains a very clean and clear display. One can tell by the citation listing, whether or not there is full text, graphics, page available by PDF, or an abstract of

at least 75 words. Users may also link and save the information needed by creating links to articles and search results. The citations themselves are very clear with the title of the source always in bold and the author's names in italics. Students can easily read parts of the citation and are likely to document their sources more accurately and completely. At the top of the result list is a series of tabs that allow users to limit by publication type such as "scholarly journals"," magazines", "trade publications", or" newspapers". A "text only" interface can be set as the default or can be selected from any page. Options to print and email articles are clearly marked.

By checking off specific articles from a result list, a user can build a "Marked List" which can then be manipulated in several ways. Links to the articles and searches can be downloaded as an HTML file, citations can be exported to bibliographic management software, and citations can be formatted in any of several standard styles (MLA, APA, etc.) However, users are warned that the citations may not be formatted accurately and they should double check elsewhere. Hopefully, correcting this problem is high on the Proquest bug list.

Search results sometimes can be crowded with unnecessary "noise." Any search that includes ProQuest 5000, for example, will often lead to mostly newspaper and business trade stories. Sometimes a relevant peer-reviewed journal or magazine article may not be found on the first page of results. Students can weed out some of the "noise" by selecting types of publications such as "Magazines" or "Scholarly Journals" from the folder tabs from the search results. However, the librarian may want to consider providing more than one link to get into the ProQuest Bundle, go into the administrative settings, and create different links for different search purposes, perhaps selecting only particular databases for particular types of searches. That way if a student is searching for topics that tend to not focus so much on newspapers and business trade publications, they do not need to be flooded with such results.

Libraries subscribing to A-Z list services such as Serials Solutions should be aware that Proquest does not allow linking to these lists if there is full-text content in Proquest for **any** dates of the publication. Also, the links that are available are not visible from the result list. The user must open the article reference to access the link.

When coming onto the list of databases screen in the ProQuest Bundle, the user can choose particular databases, "Select All Databases" or "Clear All Databases." The administrative settings allow the librarian to create different introductory search options for students for different types of search purposes. One option that unfortunately we could not view in our trial, is to turn on the ProQuest Research Library subject modules (usually used in the individual database). Apparently, turning on this option would be embedded in the ProQuest 5000 interface in the Bundle. The ProQuest Research Library subject modules allow a student to narrow a search to specific subject/discipline areas such as, for example, "Multicultural Studies, "Women's Studies" or "Philosophy and Religion."

ProQuest is ADA compliant and is compatible with software such as Jaws and Zoom-Text. There is also a Spanish -language interface that links to the Help Screen, search screens, thesaurus, and Topic Finders in Spanish.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES 4, 3, 4, 4

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?

Proquest's user support features are excellent. Context-sensitive help is available from any page by clicking the "help" button in the top right corner. One can search the online help by keyword, browse a keyword index, or use a table of contents. From the search page, users can click on "search tips" for assistance with phrase searching, truncation, fielded searches, etc. The Help screens have easy to follow directions and also include well written handouts that a librarian could print out, with very nicely done sample screens. If only the rest of our vendors can do as good as a job in writing their instructions to our user group!

From both places, users can access the "Training Resource Center" which gives information on linking and technical support, as well as resources for the local administrator. There is a link to technical support at the bottom of the main help screen. The technical support page list phone and fax numbers, an email address, and available hours. Support includes evenings and weekends. One of the reviewers has found response time for technical problems to have been slow, but others have not had such experiences. One in fact has commented on "very good response time."

The vendor does provide training both through on campus visit and through live, interactive Web-based training. Training is available on line to guide staff and patrons through basic and advanced searches. The tutorial for students (Training Research Center) gives the novice and even the more advanced user good search strategies and advice . Another very nice feature in the Basic Search is the explanation to the users of the definitions in use of what a scholarly and peer reviewed article means.   Detailed title lists for each database are available from Proquest.com.

COST 4, 4, 4, 4

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

The overall pricing is excellent for the amount of content made available. The flat pricing is extremely favorable to mid to large sized community colleges. Smaller colleges might have a harder time justifying the price. It should definitely be considered by libraries on an individual basis looking for both an aggregate and supporting complementary group of databases for their individual institutions. While the bundle could fulfill most of a Library's needs for online resource materials, like the other big packages being offered by its competitors, it does not completely fill all online needs.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE 4, 3, 4, 4

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

ProQuest has definitely continued its efforts in making its product ADA compliant. Users need to have up to date browsers (Internet Explorer 5.1 and above, Netscape 6.2 and above). Java is necessary and must be enabled. Browsers must be able to accept cookies. Adobe Acrobat Reader is needed to view PDF files (of which a great number of full text titles, especially scholarly journal titles are only available in this form). ProQuest does provide a link to Adobe Acrobat Reader's download page in its "Help" screens. The database is 24/7 and was always available with excellent interactive speed both on and off campus. ProQuest supports remote authentication.

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 Library Directors 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 Library Directors for their acceptance or rejection.

Overall Assessment   3, 3, 3, 3

"The Proquest bundle offers community colleges access to thousands of titles at an affordable price. Some of the databases included in the package have questionable value but the combination of Research Library, ABI Inform, Newspapers, Career and Technical, and Health and Medical provide a substantial core. "

"While coverage on peer-reviewed sources may not be as extensive as its competitor in terms of number of titles, backfiles, and titles by particular publishers, ProQuest is strong in its superior coverage of nationally acclaimed newspapers and extensive business resources. Its unique Biology Journals database is also a very welcomed resource as part of the whole package. The Research Library could be extensive enough for a two year community college with the scholarly titles that are available, and the subject modules can provide students focused searches that they can never get with ProQuest's competitors.
The search interface is very user friendly. There are more options in selecting databases to search, options for students to browse and find topics, options to view results translated into other languages (granted by a computer), and options to limit search results by a click of a folder tab rather than having to conduct another search. ProQuest gets much kudos in providing a search interface appropriate to members of our user group who can often be novice users, either new to library subscription databases, or even new to the World Wide Web or computers."

"Proquest is an excellent choice for those community colleges that are facing budget problems. It has a more than adequate collection for most general education students with the added benefit that other more specific databases are available from Proquest that use the same interface."

"The Proquest bundle is a good package of databases offered at an attractive price. There are several databases [in] the bundle that are not essential for community college students because of the lack of full-text or type of content. These include Proquest Religion, Accounting & Tax, Accounting & Tax Periodicals, Pharmaceutical News Index, and ERIC plus Text. My campus uses another database vendor for our core periodical databases. The proquest bundle is not attractive enough to entice us to switch vendors."