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**COURSE OBJECTIVES: WHAT YOU WILL LEARN**

This course teaches concepts and methods of online information retrieval, emphasizing their application to bibliographic and non-bibliographic databases used by libraries, information centers, and related organizations. The course will emphasize the Dialog information service, but the principles covered will be broadly applicable to other online services and information products.

At the end of the course, you should:

- Be familiar with the most important information retrieval terms and concepts as they apply to database searching in libraries and related organizations.

- Understand the purpose, characteristics, advantages, and limitations of online information services and databases used by libraries and related organizations.

- Be able to perform Dialog searches of bibliographic and non-bibliographic databases using basic and selected advanced commands.

- Be able to utilize selected other information services and databases.

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**TOPICS TO BE COVERED**

Week 1
- Introduction to course requirements
- Essential terms and concepts for online searching

Week 2
- Essential terms and concepts for online searching (cont.)
- Introduction to the Dialog information service

Week 3
- Basic commands for searching DialogClassic – Part 1
- Survey of Dialog databases – Part 1

Week 4
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Basic commands for searching DialogClassic – Part 2
- Survey of Dialog databases – Part 2
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 5
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Basic commands for searching DialogClassic – Part 3
- Survey of Dialog databases – Part 3
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 6
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Advanced commands for searching DialogClassic—Part 1
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 7
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Advanced commands for searching DialogClassic—Part 2
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 8
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Advanced commands for searching DialogClassic—Part 3
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 9
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Commands for simultaneous searching of multiple databases
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 10
- Review of Dialog commands introduced in last session
- Commands for searching citation databases, sorting search results
- Search practice with specific databases

Week 11
- Searching locally mounted databases – Part 1
- Search practice with multidiscliplinary databases

Week 12
- Searching locally mounted databases – Part 2
- Search practice with business databases

Week 13
- Special requirements and techniques for web search engines
- Survey of general-purpose search engines

Week 14

- Survey of special-purpose search engines
- Practice with web search engines

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**ASSIGNED READING**

The textbooks for this class can be downloaded from the Dialog web site using the following instructions:

1. Go to http://support.dialog.com/searchaids/dialog/
2. On the search aids screen, select User Guides from the list near the top.
3. Download the following publications:
   - Pocket Guide to Dialog
   - Dialog Search Basics Quick Reference Card
   - Basic Skills Review for Classic Dialog Searchers
   - Successful Searching with Dialog Command Language
   - Dialog Database Selection Guide
   - Dialog Database OneSearch Categories

The latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to download Dialog documentation.

At the end of each class, you should read the sections of the Successful Searching and Basic Skills Review publications that correspond to the commands covered in class. Together these publications total over 300 pages. In addition, you should read sections of the Database Selection Guide and OneSearch Categories that correspond to the databases covered in a specific class session. It is recommended that you print out the Pocket Guide and bring it to class with you.

At each class session, you will also receive handouts that present the topic for that class in an organized outline format along with searches, some of which will be performed in class. You will be expected to perform these searches outside of class and be prepared to discuss them at the next class session.

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**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on written assignments and on a final exam, which will require you to perform Dialog and web searches. To qualify for the grade of A in the course, you must successfully complete 8 of the written assignments described below. For a grade of B, you must complete 6 of the assignments. All students must complete assignments #1 and #2. On average, each assignment will require approximately 12 to 15 hours to complete. You may complete these assignments at your own pace, but you should work on them steadily throughout the semester. For a

grade of A, you should complete 1 assignment per 12 days on average.  For a grade of B, you should complete 1 assignment on average per 16 days on average.

The due date and submission method for assignments will be announced in class.  No assignments will be returned.  Make a copy for yourself prior to submitting your assignments.  You must select from the following assignments.  Substitutions are not permitted, but the assignments can be narrowed, where appropriate, to suit individual interests.

**1. Dialog Search**.  This assignment requires you to perform a Dialog search for information that might be requested by a public library user.  You are asked to prepare a list of articles about the use of Nexium (esomeprazole), a prescription medication developed by AstraZeneca, to treat acid reflux, a condition in which stomach acid backs up into the esophagus.  In particular, the requester is interested in articles that deal with side effects and possible drug interactions associated with Nexium.  To satisfactorily complete this assignment, you must provide 30 citations to magazine articles or other publications.  All citations must be for works published after 2001.  You must use at least three Dialog databases.  At least five citations must be publications that are suitable for general readers as opposed to medical professionals.  Your report should explain your search strategy and the databases utilized.  Your report should include a list of bibliographic citations (Dialog format 3).  Do not include abstracts (Dialog format 5), full-text (Dialog format 7), or complete bibliographic records (Dialog format 9) although you will need to examine them to determine the relevance of specific articles.   All students must do this assignment.

**2. Other Information Services**.  While this course emphasizes Dialog, a number of other information services offer online databases for the library market.  Prepare a report about one of the following information services:

- Data-Star
- Ovid
- WilsonWeb
- OCLC FirstSearch
- Lexis-Nexis
- Westlaw
- Questel
- DIMDI
- STN International
- Ebscohost
- ScienceDirect
- Thomson Reuters Web of Science and Web of Knowledge
- Engineering Village
- Thomson Research
- High Beam Research

Your report should include the following information:  a brief history of the information service, its current owner, the types of databases or other resources offered, the types of libraries and related organizations for which the service is best suited, overlap or other comparisons with Dialog, recent announcements about new offerings or innovations, any related products, such as CD-ROM databases or implementations designed for end-user searching, that the service may offer.  NOTE: You may submit reports for two information services.  Each will count as one assignment completed.

3. **Database Publishers**.  Dialog and other information services provide online access to databases that are produced by others.  These information providers include companies and government agencies.  Prepare a report about one of the following database producers:

- Gale (Cengage Learning)
- HW Wilson
- Thomson Reuters Science
- Engineering Information Incorporated
- ProQuest

Your report should include the following information:  company history and other background information, the types of databases or other resources the company produces, the subject areas covered, types of libraries for which the company's databases are best suited, recent announcements about new offerings or innovations, and related products, such as printed indexes or CD-ROM databases, that the information provider offers. NOTE: You may submit reports for two database publishers.  Each will count as one assignment completed.

4. **Databases In-Depth**.  The Dialog service provides online access to hundreds of databases.  This course provides a brief introduction to selected popular databases.   To learn more, prepare an in-depth report about one of the following databases:

- ABI Inform
- EMBASE
- AGRICOLA
- PASCAL
- Readers Guide Abstracts Full Text
- Historical Abstracts
- CA Search
- Ei Compendex
- PsycINFO
- Investext
- Disclosure
- Social SciSearch

Your report should include the following information:  the name of the producer, the purpose and scope of the database, the types of libraries for which the database is best suited, printed counterparts (if any), factors that affect the database's searchability on Dialog (from Dialog bluesheets), other online services that offer the database (if any), and availability of the database on CD-ROM.   NOTE: You may submit reports for two databases.  Each will count as one assignment completed.

**4.   Fee vs. Free**.  Certain databases available on Dialog are also available free-of-charge, or partially so, in web implementations.  Prepare a report comparing one of the following databases in its Dialog implementation and its free version:

- Medline
- ERIC
- Kompass Worldwide
- EDGAR
- Businesswire
- PR Newswire
- US Patents Fulltext
- GPO Monthly Catalog

Your report should consider the differences (if any) between the Dialog and web-based implementation.  These differences could involve content, chronological coverage, updating frequency, search capabilities, format, or other attributes.  Your report should also address the question whether the Dialog implementation offers sufficient added-value to warrant paying to access the database as opposed to using the free version.  NOTE: You may submit reports for two databases.  Each will count as one assignment completed.

**5.   Newspapers on Dialog and on the Web**.  Like other information services, Dialog provides online access to the full text of many newspapers, but newspaper publishers increasingly also offer online access through their own web sites.  For this report, you are asked to examine Dialog databases and publisher-operated web sites for the following five newspapers:

- Christian Science Monitor
- USA Today
- Miami Herald
- Boston Globe
- New York Times

Based on that examination, prepare a report that compares and contrasts the Dialog implementations with the publisher-operated web sites. Your report must discuss all five newspapers in aggregate.  It should consider the differences (if any) between the Dialog and web-based implementations.  These differences could involve content, backfile coverage, updating frequency, search capabilities, format, or other attributes.  Note that the newspaper-operated web sites impose charges for some types of searches.  Your

report should discuss the types of information that is available for free vs. the information for which the searcher must pay.

6. **Topical Bibliography**. By searching Dialog databases or other online information sources, prepare an annotated bibliography of articles or other publications dealing with one of the following topics:

- CD-ROM / DVD-ROM databases
- Online searching in a particular type of library (school, public, academic, special)
- Search strategies and methods
- End-user searching
- Implementation and administration of online searching in libraries

Your bibliography must include a minimum of 15 publications representing a total of 100 pages of reading. For each article or other publication, your annotation should include the database and online service from which the article was retrieved, a complete bibliographic citation (author, title, publication, volume, issue, year, pagination), and a one paragraph summary of the article. The summary should cover the major points treated in the article. NOTE: You may submit bibliographies for two topics. Each will count as one assignment completed.

7. **Periodicals about Online Searching**. Describe, compare, and contrast 5 periodicals that regularly publish articles about online searching and/or databases. The periodicals must be intended for professional librarians. Examples that deal specifically with searching include *Online*, *Searcher*, and *Online Information Review*. Articles about online searching and databases can also be found in more general library journals. Electronic journals are also acceptable. Your report can consider the types of articles the periodicals publish (research, practical advice, database reviews, etc.), their subject scope, the qualifications of contributors, overall production values, their intended audience and readability, the level of technical knowledge and library experience, required of readers, etc.

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## OUT-OF-CLASS WORKLOAD

The out-of-class workload for this course is a composite of assigned reading, review of in-class notes and assigned searches, preparation of written assignments, and the take-home final exam. The estimated out-of-class workload is 131 to 149 hours for the B grade and 155 to 179 hours for the A grade. The estimated out-of-class workload is calculated as follows:

- The anticipated out-of-class workload for textbook reading and review of in-class notes is 4 hours per week for a total of 56 hours for the semester.

- The anticipated out-of-class workload for the B grade is approximately 72 to 90 hours. The anticipated workload for the A grade is 96 to 120 hours.

- The anticipated out-of-class workload for the take-home final exam is 3 hours.