ACS Directory of Graduate Research on Disc[1]

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Need the phone number of a member of the chemistry faculty at Michigan State? The address of the biochemistry department at the University of California, Davis? Want to know the current research focus of the chemical engineering faculty at the New Jersy Institute of Technology? Any chemistry librarian and user of chemical literature will immediately suggest you look at the *ACS Director of Graduate Research*, a tool which has been a staple of chemistry libraries for many years. The *ACS Directory of Graduate Research*, 1991 edition, is now available in a CD ROM version—*ACS Directory of Graduate Research on Disc* (DGR)—allowing the user to quickly check out phone numbers but much, much more.

The DGR is DOS-based and requires an IBM PC or 100% compatible computer, version 3.1 DOS or higher, and a CD-ROM drive with MS-DOS extensions. Either monochrome or color monitors may be used. As with most CD-ROM products, color is more impressive but monochrome is acceptable. I used a Zenith 386/20, amber monitor and a Phillips drive for the test. Speed was satisfactory with this setup. Loading the database was quite easy.

The full text of the DGR is searchable, allowing the user to search on research disciplines as easily as institution or faculty name. Boolean logic and truncation capabilities allow for complex searches, for example, finding the one faculty member listed who specializes in bioinorganic chemistry and lives in the state of Washington. It took only a few seconds to find that, at the time of publication, there were 1065 female faculty members in ACS accredited programs.

Using the DGR is relatively easy. Available commands are listed across the bottom of the screen, generally by using function keys. Help screens are context sensitive and are the primary way to find out the full capabilties of the system. A brief set of directions, designed to fit into the jewel box, is also supplied.

Boolean logic and bound phrase searches are allowed as is truncation. Searching bio*, an example suggested in the printed directions, in faculty specialization took surprisingly little time, less than a minute on my system. A link command is provided to make it easy to go from faculty to departmental records.

The primary flaw in this product is that it is too tied to the print, taking little advantage of the computer's capabilities. Once past the various copyright warnings (to get DGR started, one must first traverse two copyright statements, one for content and one for the programs), the user must choose to search either Universities/Colleges or Faculty Members. This first glance makes the product appear to be quite limited. The next screen is a list of boxes, labeled with the appropriate options, such as name and research area. All the data normally listed under the college or faculty member are searchable, including research areas, zip codes, gender, and birth date. The retrieved answer set confusing unless you are familiar with the print edition. In the search sample on female faculty members, a box is initially displayed, wih the total number retrieved in the upper-right-hand corner. Within the box, several names were displayed, listing first the female faculty members in chemistry departments, in alphabetical order initially by college or university number and then, finally, by faculty name. These were followed by those in chemical engineering and so forth. The user is allowed to print all the results, including full faculty records with publications or a partial list excluding publications. Downloading the publications list is not permitted.

This is not the first electronic version of the DGR, though it does seem a more logical format. I did very few searches on the BRS online version. While the answers I got were satisfactory, I was very much aware of the dollars and time ticking away. Assuming a reasonable initial cost, CD-ROM allows a more relaxed exploration of the database.

I see several changes that will be needed to improve this product for the next edition. A sort function is needed if there is to be a real advantage over the print edition. It is much faster to use the print to look up a phone number or an address. The advantage of a computer is to build lists and perform searches with multiple requirements. It is already possible to do sophisticated searching, but to make any logical sense of the answer, the results need to be downloaded into another software package.

Related to this is what seemed to me an overly active protection of copyright. The copyright statement seemed to pop up all over the place and even remained on my screen after I exited the program. I have my doubts about the need to protect the product this tightly but will leave further discussion of this topic for another forum.

In general, I think most academic libraries and anyone who has the need to identify faculty, subject experts, etc., will benefit by having a copy of the *ACS Directory of Graduate Research on Disc*. The price is not unreasonable though considerably more than the $60 for the equivalent print edition. Considering the heavy use this directory gets, I cannot see canceling my standing order for the print. Most of the uses in my library are the quick look-up type. It would be nice to have a discount for those who get both formats.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

(1) *ACS Directory of Graduate Research on Disc*; American Chemical Society: Washington, D.C., 1993 (equivalent to print 1991 edition). List price: $189.95. Academic price: $159.95. Member price: $149.