
UnCover: the article access solution*

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The current climate for academic libraries is such that traditional collection development philosophies are being examined anew. The rising cost of journals, coupled with steady or declining budgets, has necessitated a review of the means for providing access to information at the local level. Where once the local collection was all-important, the focus now has shifted in other directions. As Leach describes it, libraries will begin to shift collection development funds to document delivery services. Instead of purchasing resources "just in case," the new paradigm may be purchasing information "just in time" [1]. Anticipating this shift and taking advantage of existing technologies, the UnCover Company has developed a service that, although relatively new, has been widely discussed [2-7].

UnCover: a description

UnCover is an online article delivery service, a table of contents database, and a periodical index. Nearly 15,000 periodicals are indexed by UnCover, and new titles are added regularly. By the end of 1994, UnCover is expected to include close to 20,000 periodical titles, with approximately 60% to 70% in the sciences, technology, and medicine. Four thousand citations are added to the database each day.

The UnCover collection reflects the holdings of its supply-site libraries—academic institutions and major public libraries in Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, and Wyoming. Agreements have been signed with additional libraries, such as Lane Medical Library at Stanford University, the physical science and biomedical libraries at the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Maryland libraries. Additional agreements are underway with the Aus-

tralian National Library and the Irish Consortium, a group of academic libraries in Ireland.

J. H. Wiley and Sons have joined with UnCover in a pilot project in which enhanced table of contents data are incorporated into the UnCover database. The Wiley material is received prepublication in machine-readable form. A request for a Wiley article will be forwarded to the Wiley offices in New York and filled by fax from the company's own optically stored image of the article.

UnCover, introduced in 1988, is designed specifically for the network environment. Although the article delivery feature was not available initially, the goal from its inception was for UnCover to offer article delivery for every citation located within the database. No CD-ROM or print version of UnCover has been created, and, as of this writing, the UnCover database has not been loaded on a system other than the one for which it was created originally.

The database is multidisciplinary and can be used to complement other, more narrowly defined databases. End-user access and ease of use are built into the system, allowing for options ranging from simple

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menu prompts to command-level searching with full Boolean operators, explicit truncation, and combination name and word search. UnCover allows users to take a keyword approach to contents of periodicals or to browse by journal title, also providing for recreation of tables of contents from individual issues.

DATABASE ACCESS AND ORDERING

In September 1991, UnCover began offering article delivery by fax. The service features delivery within twenty-four hours. Articles that have been ordered previously are saved on an optical storage device (with publisher permission) and can be delivered within one hour. As of mid-1993, approximately 10% of the database fell into this category.

The database may be accessed via telnet or through direct dial. End users and interlibrary loan staff members may search the database without a password. A confidential user profile may be set up for ordering. Articles may be marked for ordering, and information from the profile can be entered into the order by default. Payment may be made by credit card, deposit account, or monthly invoicing. Charges for an article include a copyright fee, paid either directly to the publisher or through the Copyright Clearance Center.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

UnCover is planning a selected alerting service, which will deliver enhanced tables of contents pages to subscribers' electronic mailboxes. Articles will be ordered by reply mail. Image-transfer software, which

will enable UnCover to transmit the full text of articles to patron workstations, is also in development. Software development is well underway for a PC interface, which will make use of pull-down menus and "point and click" mouse navigation. A true graphical user interface is also in its preliminary design phase.

SUMMARY

The UnCover company has developed an online service tailored to the changing environment of information delivery and access. The use of such new technologies may change the way in which libraries build collections and allocate funds.

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