

Beyond Bitnet: Telnetting to the United Kingdom

By Martin Kesselman

Rich resources are just a remote login away

Last year I was a visiting librarian at Brunel University near London through the 91/92 U.K. Fulbright Professional Librarian Award. During my stay I had the opportunity to meet several U.K. academic librarians and gave talks and demonstrations on Internet access to library OPACs, databases, and other information services from the United States. I thought in return it might be of interest now to share with U.S. librarians the resources available in the U.K. from JANET, the Joint Academic Network, and a little bit on the very successful BIDS service (Bath Information and Data Service) of which I am truly envious.

Why access JANET?

There are several reasons U.S. academic librarians should be interested in JANET. Foremost of these is access to unique information resources such as U.K. library OPACs, BLAISE-LINE (the British Library's online search service), gateway access to several European online services, and access to some unique specialized services developed for librarians and the academic community that are of worldwide interest.

JANET was established in 1984 and is now managed by the Joint Network Team based at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory near Oxford and funded by the Information Systems Committee (formerly the Computer Board) of the Universities Funding Council. JANET could be thought of as the U.K. equivalent of Bitnet and, as such, supports electronic mail, library

OPACs, conferences, bulletin boards, and gateways to other networks and services. As JANET is an x.25 packet-switched network and the Internet uses the TCP/IP protocols, there is a gateway between the two known as "fat pipe," which unfortunately is often slow due to the ever-increasing traffic between the two networks. JANET also provides access to IXI (International x.25 Infrastructure), the European academic network reaching 18 different countries and funded by the European Commission. JANET, through the new JANET MK II, provides speeds of 2MB per second and, in the next five years through SuperJANET, is expected to offer 34 and then 100MB-per-second lines with the capability to send books and images across the network. As speeds on JANET and Internet (due to NREN) increase and the Internet moves towards OSI (Open System Interconnect, as with the x.25 suite of protocols), much greater connectivity will be possible.

How to Telnet to the U.K.

Telnet is the protocol to remotely logon to another host computer on the Internet. Access to JANET from the Internet is quite easy. To access resources available on JANET, do the following (type in the commands in boldface):

1. Telnet 128.86.8.7 or Telnet sun.nsf.ac.uk (the number and named addresses are equivalent and a matter of personal preference).
2. When asked for the login, type janet (janet must be in lowercase).
3. When asked for the hostname, type in the NRS (name registration scheme) name beginning with uk.ac. For example, to access the OPAC at Brunel University, the hostname would be uk.ac.brunel.library. To access the JANET news service, type uk.ac.janet.news.

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JANET discussion groups and bulletin boards

All of the Internet and JANET directories of OPACs, databases, mail groups, etc., are available on BUBL, the Bulletin Board for Librarians. BUBL is available through Glasgow University (GU) (hostname: uk.ac.glasgow.bubl) and is edited by Denis Nicholson at Strathclyde University and Chris Bailey at GU. BUBL also includes a glossary, archives of several electronic journals and newsletters (including ACRL's Science and Technology Section's *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship*), a current contents service of library and information science publications, information on library projects, and news from the British Library.

Similar to BUBL (it uses the same bulletin board software developed at Leicester University) is HUMBUL, the Humanities Bulletin Board at Oxford University (hostname: uk.ac.humbul), funded by the British Library R&D Department. HUMBUL maintains a membership register (it's free to join), news items including book reviews and conference reports, software reports, listings of forthcoming meetings and conferences, grant awards, and British Library news. HUMBUL also includes descriptions of ongoing projects (e.g., the Oxford Text Archive at Oxford University and the Center for Music Research at Florida State University), activities of various associations, courses available, and software and networked information.

Want to know what's going on in academic librarianship in the U.K.? Similar to the listserv discussion groups on Bitnet, you can join a mailbase group on JANET. Largest of the mailbase groups is LIS-LINK, formed last year by the merger of several other mailbase groups including LIS-IS (information services), LIS-IT (information technology), LIS-Univ (university librarians), and LIS-Poly (polytechnic and college librarians). As a merged group, LIS-LINK covers computer-based information services, reference services, bibliographic instruction, and networked services. Other mailbase groups of interest to U.S. librarians are LIS-Rarebooks, LIS-Medical, and LIS-X500. The mailbase groups are offered through NISP, the Networked Information Services Project at the University of Newcastle. To subscribe to any of these lists, send an e-mail to: Mailbase@UK.AC.Newcastle with no subject line and the one-line message: Subscribe lastname yourfirstname yourlastname (e.g., my subscription to LIS-LINK would read: subscribe LIS-LINK Martin Kesselman). For a

general introduction to the U.K. mailbase groups, send an e-mail message to: Mailbase@newcastle.ac.uk with the two-line message: Get Mailbase Overview; Subscribe LIS-Info yourfirstname yourlastname. A full list of mailbase and other JANET e-mail discussion groups with directions on how to subscribe is also on BUBL Section F1.

Access to U.K. and European online services

Through JANET one can access the British Library's online service BLAISE-Line and, via the NISS gateway on JANET, access several major European online services such as ECHO, DIMDI, and ESA-IRS. BLAISE-Line is accessible directly via JANET (hostname: uk.bl.xblaise) and includes access to the British National Bibliography Database, *Whitaker's British Books in Print*, Conference Proceedings Database (conferences received by the British Library Document Supply Center since 1964), the British Library's Humanities and Social Sciences Catalog, catalog of the British Library's Science Reference and Information Services, HMSO (Her Majesty's Stationary Office) publications, and SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe). An annual overseas subscription to BLAISE-Line costs 83 pounds, which includes the user manual and subscription to the bimonthly *BLAISE-Line Newsletter*. Online connect costs are only 10 pounds per hour (approximately \$18). Prints cost 45 pence each online, but offline the cost is only 9 pence each plus 35 pence for each page. Documents can also be ordered directly via BLAISE from the British Library's Document Supply Center.

The NISS (National Information on Software and Services) gateway on JANET (hostname: uk.ac.niss) provides access to European online services such as DIMDI, a German online service with several bilingual biomedical databases and unique expert-system menus for end users; ECHO, the European Community Host Organization's online service; and ESA-IRS (European Space Agency Information Retrieval Service) which includes major science databases and attractive pricing. Many of these services do not provide easy telecommunications links to the United States but can now be accessed fairly easily through NISS and the Internet/JANET gateway. ECHO is extremely useful for databases dealing with EC activities, European research in progress in various disciplines, and, with the IM-Guide (Information Market) data-

base, provides a comprehensive file of electronic information services (online databases, CD-ROMs, disk-based services, etc.) and information brokers both from Europe and accessible in Europe (so most U.S. online services and databases are included). Many ECHO databases can be searched via menus or CCL (the common command language) and, as a European service many databases, such as IM-Guide, can be searched in all nine languages of the European community member countries. ESA-IRS, as a nonprofit service, offers discounts for academic institutions and nonprime-time searching, and offers a free classroom instruction program with access to over 20 major databases including ABI/INFORM and Biosis. New subscribers receive approximately \$200 worth of free connect time during their first month. ESA can also be accessed directly via the Internet (telnet 192.106.252.1) as part of the European Space Information System.

NISS also includes an information bulletin board and online catalog of software and datasets held by U.K. academic institutions. The bulletin board has various subject discipline sections (physics, sociology, etc.) and for each provides information on subject-specific bulletin boards, electronic newsletters, databases, information file servers, upcoming meetings, research and development projects, and CTI (computer teaching initiatives). The gateway provides access to various U.K. information services such as BUBL, British Telecom's Electronic Yellow Pages, and the National Public Domain Software Archive at Lancaster University.

The Bath Information and Data Service

A highlight of my time spent in the U.K. was learning about the new BIDS (Bath Information and Data Service). Originally known as the Bath ISI Data Service, as it began by offering access to all the databases from ISI (Institute for Scientific Information), the service is now available to over 60 U.K. universities over JANET. BIDS has been a real coup for U.K. academic libraries. Through an initiative by CHEST, the Combined Higher Education Software Team, BIDS offers fixed-cost access to ten years of various ISI databases—*Science Citation Index*, *Social Science Citation Index*, *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, and *Index to Scientific and Technical Proceedings*. CHEST recently signed a deal with Elsevier to provide subscription access to the Embase (Excerpta Medica database) via the BIDS service.

With BIDS, U.K. universities have been able to share computing and development resources and provide access to these databases nationwide at low cost. According to Terry Morrow, who is in charge of the service, BIDS has experienced vast growth with well over 6,000 uses per week. Because BIDS is available over each university's campus network and results are delivered by electronic mail, the service has led libraries and computer centers at each campus to work closely together. Due to this fact and the high visibility of the library in this project, Peter Stone (University of Sussex) calls the BIDS service the glasnost of the library world!

Resources

For more information on JANET and European online services:

BIDS: Bath Information and Data Service, e-mail: BIDS@BATH.AC.UK

BLAISE-Line: The British Library National Bibliographic Service, Boston Spa, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7BQ, United Kingdom; e-mail: B.Kefford@GEC-B.RL.AC.UK.

DIMDI: Postfach 42 05 80, Weibhausstrabe 27, D5000 Koln 41, Germany; phone: +49-22 147241.

ECHO: B.P. 2373, L-1023 Luxembourg; phone: +352-488041

ESA-IRS, IRS-Dialtech: British Library SRIS, 25 Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1AW, England; phone: +071-3237951.

JANET Liaison Desk: Joint Network Team, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton, Didcot, OX11 0QX, U.K.; e-mail: JANET-Liaison-Desk@JNT.AC.UK.

JANET OPACS: Online Public Access Catalogues in the U.K., compiled by Peter Stone. Cost: 2 pounds. From: University of Sussex Library, Brighton, BN1 9QL, England.

JUGL Newsletter: Cost: 10 pounds/year. From: JANET Users Group for Libraries c/o Janice Yeadon, Lyon Playfair Library, Imperial College, London, SW7 2AZ, England.

Stone, Peter. "JANET: The Educational and Research Network of the United Kingdom." In *Wide-Area Network Applications in Libraries*, edited by Gregory Zuck and Bruce Flanders. Westport, Conn.: Meckler, 1992.

Thomas, David, and Alan Jeffreys. "Making the Most of Using JANET in UK University Libraries." In *Online Information 91*, 521-27. Oxford, England: Learned Information, 1991. ■

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