Using Dialog’s Dialmail as a Means of Receiving Search Results

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Abstract

Online searchers and requestors alike are interested in obtaining the results of computer literature searches both quickly and cheaply. Dialog’s Dialmail provides an alternative to the often high price of typing online and the delay of waiting for offline prints to arrive. This paper will discuss the techniques and advantages for utilizing Dialmail as a means of receiving search results.

Introduction

There is an increasing demand from users to receive the results of computer literature searches as quickly as possible, as cheaply as possible, and as files on a floppy disk rather than a paper printout. Downloading or printing results while connected to a database can be easily done but often at significant increase in costs. At the same time the delay of receiving offline prints may be too long to meet a user’s needs. Dialog’s Dialmail provides an intermediate means of receiving search results. It is less expensive than printing online and faster than offline prints, and it is easy to use.

Dialmail is a menu-driven electronic mail system. It has the standard capabilities of an electronic mail system; sending, receiving, forwarding messages, bulletin boards, and directories. Anyone with a Dialog password has access to Dialmail. The focus of this paper is the use of Dialmail as a means of receiving the results of an online literature search on Dialog.

How to Request Prints via Dialmail

Prints can be sent to your Dialmail address quite easily. Run your search online and at the end of each PRINT command add the words “via dialmail”.

?s estuaries and circulation and model?

2932 ESTUARIES
9149 CIRCULATION
187157 MODEL?
S175 ESTUARIES AND CIRCULATION AND MODEL?

?PR 1/5/1-25 via dialmail

This will result in the system response acknowledging the prints were sent via Dialmail.

P095: PRINT 1/5/1-50 VIA DIALMAIL (items 1-50) est. cost of $17.50

As with other offline print requests you can cancel the request either during the search session or within two hours by using the PR- command. Prints are delivered to your Dialmail Inbox by 7:00 am (EST) the following day.

HOW TO RETRIEVE PRINTS FROM DIALMAIL

The next day log onto Dialmail; using Dialnet or Tymnet specify Dialmail as the address, using Telenet add "m" to the end of any address, e.g., c 415 48m. Dialmail will indicate how many messages you have and display the main menu:

You have 2 items in your Inbox.

You may enter:

SCAN to list your messages
READ to see your messages
CREATE to prepare a message or other item
PROFILE to change user profile
HELP for assistance at any time
MENU to return to the main menu at any time
EXIT to leave DIALMAIL

Commands are indicated by entering the fullword or first letter except for CO(PY), FO(RWARD), AND FORM(FORM).

Your command: S (for SCAN)

DAILMAIL responds.
You may enter:

INBOX to scan your unread messages
DESK to scan messages you have read today
FOLDER to scan messages within a folder
BBBOARD to scan messages within a bboard
CONF to scan messages within a conference
LISTS to scan all mailing lists
DIRECT to scan your personal directory
PUBLIC to scan public bboards, confs, dir
MENU to return to the main menu

Your command: I (for INBOX)

It is possible to stack your commands initially and avoid the second menu: S I to
SCAN INBOX. While it is possible to read messages without having to scan your inbox
this display is very helpful if messages are going to be downloaded.

2 messages found in Inbox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Posted</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>JUN03 02:31</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Pam Mofjeld</td>
<td>&gt;File 6:NTIS - 64-87/ISS1</td>
<td>Prts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>JUN03 02:31</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>Pam Mofjeld</td>
<td>&gt;File 6:NTIS - 64-87/ISS1</td>
<td>Prts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may enter:

READ to READ the messages you scanned
DELETE to Delete the messages you scanned
PRINT to Print the messages you scanned
SCAN to Scan for other messages
HELP for assistance
MENU to return to the main menu

Your command:

At this point, messages can be READ individually by specifying a message number
or consecutively by requesting ALL. Messages can be read and printed simultaneously
or downloaded to a disk and printed once you are offline. At the end of each message
the system displays the following menu:

You may enter:
READ to read this message again
ANS to answer the sender of this message
DELETE to delete the message
FILE message in a folder
FORWARD to forward message to other users
EDIT to edit a copy of the message
NEXT to read the next message
MENU to return to the main menu

Your command:

You can DELETE messages at this point but I recommend simply going to the NEXT message. This places the message that you have just read on your DESK. Then if for some reason you need to go back and read the message again you can read it from you DESK. The DESK is cleared every night so you don’t need to worry about going back and clearing messages.

It is possible to FORWARD messages to another user with a Dialmail account. After having READ a message select FORWARD as the option from the menu. The system will prompt you to enter the address to forward the prints to. This would be a useful feature for institutions having requestors at remote/distant locations. It is possible to establish Dialmail only accounts for such sites.

If you will be downloading references to a disk it is very helpful to have the list of messages from the SCAN INBOX display. If you have a large number of prints and can anticipate that you will need more than one floppy then you can distribute the messages evenly between the disks. It is best to change disks between messages to avoid having to reread any messages. If your disk becomes full part way through a message you can have some real problems. In tests it appeared that four full messages (999 lines each) was about the limit of one floppy disk.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Prints received via Dialmail are charged the same price as an offline print. The connect time to Dialmail is $12.00/hour and if you include Dialnet telecommunication charges then it is $20.00/hour (U.S.); which works out to be $.33/minute. This is in many cases a substantial savings over the connect time costs of most databases; e.g., ASFA $87/hour; BIOSIS, $87/hour; and NTIS, $69/hour.

COST COMPARISONS OF VARIOUS MEANS OF RECEIVING CITATIONS

A search was done on the NTIS database and cost comparisons for a variety of means of receiving search results were calculated (Table 1); including type references online, download references while online, request offline prints, and request prints via DIALMAIL.
TABLE 1. Time and cost comparison of various means of receiving search results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME FACTORS</th>
<th>Print offline</th>
<th>DIALMAIL</th>
<th>Download online</th>
<th>Type online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online connect time*</td>
<td>.005 hrs</td>
<td>.294 hrs</td>
<td>.281 hrs</td>
<td>.347 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline time</td>
<td>4-5 days</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>4-5 days</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td>.347 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COST FACTORS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect time cost**</td>
<td>$ .39</td>
<td>$ 5.29</td>
<td>$21.24</td>
<td>$26.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online type cost</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$12.50</td>
<td>$12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline print cost</td>
<td>$17.50</td>
<td>$17.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td>$17.89</td>
<td>$22.79</td>
<td>$33.74</td>
<td>$39.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test was done at 1200 baud. *Does not include the time necessary to do a search. **Includes telecommunication cost.

In each case, requesting prints off line was the least expensive alternative, though was the least flexible in terms of medium, floppy disks aren't an option. There is also the time delay of receiving the prints in the mail.

The next least expensive means of receiving prints was to request them via Dialmail. There was only an overnight delay in receiving citations, the flexibility to download to a disk and subsequently print, and considerable savings over the cost of typing citations online.

Typing citations while online was the most expensive means of receiving citations. If the patron has an immediate need for the references it is suggested that if at all possible to download the references while online and print later when offline.

The degree of savings to using Dialmail will vary from database to database, depending on the cost of connect time and the charges of online vs offline prints. For small answer sets it may be as cost effective to download while online.

CONCLUSIONS

Dialmail is an easy to use electronic mail system. It provides searchers with another option for fulfilling patron requests for online searches. Using Dialmail can provide substantial savings over receiving citations while online, and at the same time eliminates the delay of waiting for offline prints.