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Evan Reader
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The California State University Office of the Chancellor
401 Golden Shore, 5th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802-4210

RE: Responses to California State University (CSU) Libraries, Electronic Access to Information Resources (EAR) Committee Review of NewsBank Full-Text Newspapers Proposal

Dear Committee Members:

NewsBank, inc., has read, reviewed and analyzed the comments of the CSU EAR Committee regarding our proposal to provide NewsBank full-text newspapers in a special, custom newspaper package that has been developed specifically for your Consortium.

Our offer has very strong discounting and excellent pricing for every member of the Consortium, regardless of size. The pricing is presented both in the EAR's COST section of our response (page 7) and on the Cal State Pricing attachment. Because the price for each school is specifically spelled out in that spreadsheet, the Committee will clearly see that NewsBank indeed has very good pricing for the Consortium.

Our intention on all of the pages that follow is to provide the Committee with:

- specific responses to clarify information within our proposal;
- specific responses outlining immediate remedies or changes we will make that will address and correct items of concern;
- specific responses concerning changes or design enhancements to our functionality.

By addressing all of your concerns and questions we hope to show our desire to meet the needs of the CSU Libraries, demonstrating that NewsBank is the vendor of choice.

NewsBank offers the deepest and broadest newspaper content available anywhere. Our local, regional, and national titles are fully searchable within a single database. Unlike our competitors, each title is the complete electronic edition of record. Review of our competitor's products will reveal that a significant portion of their newspaper content is selected rather than full text.

While some of the newspaper titles contained within NewsBank Newspapers are available through other sources, it is the compilation of all of these full text titles within a single search experience that sets us apart. More importantly, the convenience and ease of accessing all of that primary source information

helps those students or researchers who are not likely to wade through multiple databases with multiple interfaces.

NewsBank appreciates that the CSU EAR thoroughly reviewed our proposal, and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our response to your comments, particularly those clarifying our pricing.

Thank you for continued interest in NewsBank's Newspaper products.

Sincerely,

David Braden
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Attachments: Assessment Attribute Comments and Responses (10 pages)
Pricing spreadsheet (1 page)

Each Committee assessment attribute is addressed separately below.

INFORMATION DATABASE

Comment:

“One hot topic was Terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom. While it may have excellent links, the table on the right side bled into the wording in the middle, making it very difficult to read.”

Comment:

“Most of the content in this database is already available in other sources. Of the ten California papers, only two are not currently available in at least one database in CSU’s Electronic Core Collection.”

Response:

We have been unable to see or re-create this problem. We will fix this problem if we can re-create it. The Hot Topics feature of our product line continues to receive very positive reviews from our customers.

Response:

NewsBank’s coverage of California titles is unsurpassed by any other vendor. Below is the list of titles for which we currently have permission. Group I is online. Of these titles, eight of them are exclusive to NewsBank. (The NewsBank exclusive titles are indicated in bold print) Group II will be available soon.

Group I: **Contra Costa Times**
Daily News of Los Angeles
Fresno Bee
Los Angeles Times
Modesto Bee
Orange County Register
Press Democrat (Santa Rosa)
Press-Enterprise (Riverside)
Press-Telegram (Long Beach)
Sacramento Bee
San Diego Union Tribune
San Francisco Chronicle
San Jose Mercury News
San Luis Obispo Tribune
Valley Times
Visalia Times-Delta
West County Times (Richmond)

Group II: La Opinion
Inland Valley Daily Bulletin
Desert Sun (Palm Springs)
Pasadena Star News
Redlands Daily Facts
Salinas Californian
San Bernardino County Sun
San Gabriel Valley Tribune
Tulare Advance-Register
Ventura County Star
San Gabriel Valley Tribune
Whittier Daily News

As the Group II California titles become available they will be included at no additional charge to the sites opting for all titles.

By close of business 03/07/02 we will provide to the CSU EAR Committee an up-to-date list of all of the titles available through NewsBank.

INFORMATION DATABASE continued)

Comment:

“...it’s difficult to determine the adequacy of coverage because there is a lot of discrepancy between the starting dates on the list that NewsBank submitted to the committee and the dates on the initial search screen. For example, both the Sacramento Bee and the San Diego Union Tribune have starting dates of 1984 on the NewsBank literature but on the search screen the starting dates are in actuality 2000 – a difference of 16 years! I realize this is due to the Tasini decision...I wonder if their price will go down because of the loss of the deep backfile for these two titles – I tend to doubt it.”

Response:

It is true that the Tasini Supreme Court freelance author decision has caused publishers to remove backfile data while they continue their search for and removal of all freelance material. In some cases, this has resulted in a publisher asking that their backfiles be completely removed from our databases for a time until those databases have been thoroughly reviewed and cleaned up by that publisher. NewsBank has no control over this very fluid situation.

We expect that the Sacramento Bee backfiles will be available (1984 to Current) by 03/15/02.

When the San Diego Union Tribune will have its backfile data available is not known at this time.

However, because NewsBank is always concerned with customer service and customer satisfaction, we have provided substitute papers of the customer’s choosing to fill the need for research data while the original paper is down. We pride ourselves on being the best for our customers, and we will continue to work through these problematic issues with them.

Backfile content will be returned online as soon as it is released by the publisher. NewsBank has offered both technical and production resources to publishers to assist them in accomplishing this goal.

INFORMATION DATABASE (Continued)

Comment:

“Here is a quick comparison of NewsBank’s California titles with stated coverage dates compared to coverage, if available, in either Lexis-Nexis, Dow Jones, and/or ProQuest.

Contra Costa (2000-Cur) [L/N 1996-?]

Modesto Bee (2000-Cur) [L/N 1996-?]

San Diego Union-Tribune (2000-Cur) [L/N 1996-?]

Comment:

“It was...hard to figure out how to find dates “up to” a particular time (for example, up to August 1, 1983).

Response:

Due to the Tasini Supreme Court decision, not all backfile data was available when the Committee was reviewing our proposal.

Additions to our backfile data since the initial Committee review include :

- Contra Costa 1995-Current.
- Modesto Bee 1989-Current.

Regarding San Diego Union-Tribune, no vendor has data before 2000 because of the publisher’s need to review the data.

Response:

Although the date range functionality that is mentioned is definitely part of our design, we agree that perhaps a sample of this on our Help page would be useful. We will make this change by the end of the second quarter of 2002.

SEARCH INTERFACE

Comment:

“In the customized search, one can limit by a date range, but there isn’t an example of how, which would be nice.”

Comment:

“One crucial feature that is missing is the ability to store records and save, print, or email them all at once.”

Comments:

“One big annoyance: the requirement that the user select a newspaper before conducting a search. This is frustrating and really not what most users anticipate. It would be simpler if there were a default group of papers (say, all California papers) already selected, then users could change the group at their preference.”

“One thing I found to be annoying was that it was not obvious that you had to click on the newspapers you wanted searched before the search would proceed. There should be some default set of newspapers to users won’t keep getting the annoying message that they hadn’t selected a paper to search.

Comment:

“Small quibble: would use a word like “narrow” instead of “edit” in Edit Search button.”

Comment:

“It would also help if one could click on a link from the newspaper name and find information about the paper – publisher, dates covered, etc.

Comment:

“...when you re-do your search all marked newspapers disappear, which is slightly annoying.”

Response:

We will add an example in our help section showing how to limit by date range. We expect to have that by the end of the second quarter of 2002.

Response:

This feature will be added to our functionality. We do not have a specific date at this time, but anticipate that we will have it by the third quarter of 2002.

Response:

NewsBank understands this frustration and is currently working on a design that will incorporate default searchable titles. We will add this enhancement by the end of the second quarter of this year.

Response:

The reason that we have chosen “edit” rather than “narrow” is that in some instances the desire is to “expand” the search, rather than “narrow” it. “Edit” covers both.

Response:

We agree that this would be an excellent feature to add. We will incorporate this change by the end of the second quarter of this year.

Response:

The NewsBank interface was definitely designed to “remember” and maintain the list of papers. We will investigate this “bug” and take steps to correct it.

SEARCH INTERFACE (Continued)

Comment:

“In some instances I had difficulty finding articles I knew existed.”

Response:

Because there is no specific example given, it is difficult to address this concern.

It is possible that the article may have been removed by the publisher due to the Tasini Supreme Court decision.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES

Comment:

“...the help for searching phrases was not found...The odd thing was that references to phrase searching were in the help modules, but never spelled out.”

Response:

NewsBank will supplement the help section by adding phrase search documentation by the end of the second quarter of this year.

COST

Comments:

“...pricing needs to reflect a larger consortial discount.”

“...seems to be no consortium pricing advantage. I gave it a low ranking for this reason.”

Comment:

“I am not sure how much my campus would have to pay based on the chart passed out.”

Comment:

“I’m not sure why smaller institutions should pay more per FTE.”

Comment:

“... \$26,000 (for an institution of over 20,000 fte) for only 20 newspapers seems a little pricey...”

Response:

NewsBank’s pricing for the CSU EAR Consortium includes a discount from our individual site prices and an additional discount from our regular consortium pricing.

A simplified pricing schedule has been attached at the end of this submission. This schedule provides specific prices for each of the CSU sites.

Response:

NewsBank’s Consortium offer is this:

- (1) if a campus wants **one title**, the price is **\$.20/FTE** for that one title.
- (2) if a campus wants **two titles**, the price is **\$.32/FTE** for those two titles.
- (3) if a campus wants **three titles**, the price is **\$.42/FTE** for those three titles.
- (4) if a campus wants **four titles**, the price is **\$.49/FTE** for those four titles
- (5) if a campus wants **five titles**, the price is **\$.54/FTE** for those five titles.
- (6) if a campus wants six titles, the price is **\$.59/FTE** for those six titles.
- (7) if a campus wants **all 129* titles**, the cost would be a heavily discounted **\$.63/FTE**.

***Title list of currently available titles forthcoming on Thursday, 03/07/02.**

Response:

Small schools DO NOT pay more per FTE than large schools. In fact, the small school benefits significantly from the NewsBank proposal by receiving the same price per FTE as a large school enjoys. See the simplified spreadsheet at the end of this submission.

Response:

Using the pricing schedule outlined above, this school with 20,000 FTE would pay only \$12,600 for ALL 129* titles (20,000 x \$.63).

(* 129 titles were deliverable as of 03/07/02. As mentioned earlier there are additional titles that will be made available in the near future.)

As the remaining California papers become available they will be including in the offering at no extra charge.

COST (Continued)

Comment:

“The cost is hard to assess without knowledge of how many campuses will select how many newspapers The pricing is not dependent on the number of campuses that purchase under this offer.

Response:

The pricing is not dependent on the number of campuses that purchase under this offer.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Comments:

“Search time was slower with this database.”

“Response time is impressive.”

“Occasionally slow in responding.”

“Response time is quite good.”

“I found the response time to be slow at times. Also, I kept getting timed out and had to start over.”

“It was slightly slow in response on several occasions but not excessively so for full-text.”

“Access and response time seemed more than adequate”

“The service seemed very reliable and quick.”

“Access/connection is reliable. Response time is adequate.”

Response:

The wide variation in Committee member comments regarding our response time is understandable.

Unfortunately, during the time frame when the committee was reviewing our product, we were experiencing strained performance and some instability due to record numbers of users on our system. These sporadic performance problems have been corrected and response performance is significantly improved and stable.

The sporadic “time out” situation has been rectified.

Our service is being improved further with additional hardware installed on 03/04/02.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Comments:

“I only hope that they can bring the pricing in line with the economies of scale that make working as a consortium viable.”

“At the price of the newspaper database, it’s hard to justify subscribing to this product.”

“The apparent lack of a consortial discount may be a disincentive, however.”

“...I consider the cost to be high...”

“If the cost is brought down to an affordable rate, I would recommend.”

“...the cost is too high...”

Response:

We urge the committee members to read our responses under the COST section.

For clarity, this is the pricing package that applies to every member of the consortium:

- (1) if a campus wants **one title**, the price is **\$.20/FTE** for that one title.
- (2) if a campus wants **two titles**, the price is **\$.32/FTE** for those two titles.
- (3) if a campus wants **three titles**, the price is **\$.42/FTE** for those three titles.
- (4) if a campus wants **four titles**, the price is **\$.49/FTE** for those four titles
- (5) if a campus wants **five titles**, the price is **\$.54/FTE** for those five titles.
- (6) if a campus wants six titles, the price is **\$.59/FTE** for those six titles.
- (7) if a campus wants **all 129* titles**, the cost would be a heavily discounted **\$.63/FTE**.

Specific pricing for each site is illustrated on the last page of this submission.

For those opting to purchase all 129* titles, our pricing reflects significant value.

- Any school opting for all titles has the advantage of providing their students with the broadest selection of primary source newspaper material .
- NewsBank maintains the deepest backfile available.
- NewsBank is adding additional titles on a regular basis.
- 100% full text electronic editions of record, not “selected” content.

The price schedule on the attachment reflects both discounts described above (see page 7).