

ELECTRONICALLY SPEAKING......a spate of products on disc arrived all at once. The spectrum of subjects include Scholarly Digital Editions' disc on **The Bayeux Tapestry**—a superb product—as is Individual Software Inc.'s **Professional Business Planmaker Deluxe**. Octavo presents us with two splendid digital versions of William

Blake's best-known work, and EBSCO offers a combined online file that's a powerhouse for religious and philosophical research.

WEB ATLA RELIGION DATABASE WITH ATLASERIALS AND EBSCO'S RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY COLLECTION

EBSCO Information Svcs.
(800-653-2726; ep@epnet.com).

www.epnet.com

Date reviewed: 4/8/03

Price: Negotiated by site.

With over 1,234,000 entries, the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) **Religion Database with ATLASerials** (a full-text collection) is the primary index of major religion and theology journals and multi-author essay collections. Researchers are able to use the **ATLA Religion Database** as a search tool to retrieve images of pages in more than 50 different journals in **ATLASerials**. In a future release, page images will be supplemented with fully searchable text. Coverage dates back to 1949. EBSCO is one of several vendors offering the **ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials**.

EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection (RPC) is a database covering such topics as world religions, major denominations, biblical studies, religious history, epistemology, political philosophy, philosophy of language, moral philosophy, and the history of philosophy. This database offers nearly 300 full-text journals (some with coverage back to 1975) and includes nearly 250 peer-reviewed titles. It has 182 titles indexed by the **ATLA Religion Database** that are not available in the **ATLASerials** collection. In addition to the full text, indexing and abstracts are provided for journals in the database.

Since the focus of the **ATLA Religion Database** is partly shared by content in **EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection**, and thus libraries may want to offer their publics both products, they are reviewed here together.

The **EBSCOhost** interfaces for the **ATLA** and the **RPC** are, for the most part, straightforward and easy to use. Each has a Basic and Advanced search page, both of which allow for limiting by journal name and date. Information about searching is found under "Search Tips" and a more elaborate "Help" section. Boolean searching



is supported and explained well in both "Search Tips" and "Help." Truncation and wildcard searching are also supported, although these are not (and probably should be) mentioned in the "Search Tips." The Advanced Search allows for command-driven searches and has an easy-to-see link to the "Field Codes." Result pages are easy to read; links to full-text, when available, are on both the results list pages and individual citation pages. Results can be e-mailed, printed, or saved from both the lists and the citation pages. Search history is saved, and previous search results can be combined with Boolean and/or/not.

The **ATLA** interface also includes browse lists of subjects, publications, names as subjects, and scripture (that is, biblical citations) that can be used to create searches. The interface for the **RPC** includes browse lists for subjects and publications.

The careful, scholarly subject analysis and scripture citation index of **ATLA** stands in some contrast to the analysis and indexing in the **RPC**. In the **RPC**, the indexing is largely dependent on subject headings and keywords found in abstracts. Some journals appear to supply author-written abstracts that have well-written summaries. Other abstracts, however, are brief and, therefore, do not always supply a wealth of keywords. Since "Kaufman" is spelled "Kaufmann" in two abstracts for articles from *Zygon* from September 1994 and "Kaessmann" is spelled "Kaessman" in an abstract for *Christian Century* from December 18, 2002, the articles might not be found through the normal keyword search.

The strength of the **RPC** is its full text in HTML, PDF, and sometimes in both. When compared with the master list of **EBSCOhost**-available full-text journals, the choice of titles in this collection is excellent. The titles include traditional religion and philosophy journals in addition to a large

number of titles in the auxiliary and interdisciplinary subjects now used in the study of religion and philosophy. The inclusion of journals such as *American Historical Review*, *Antiquity*, *Orbis Litterarum*, and *Studies in Philology* (covering more traditional reading for scholars in these fields) as well as *The Economist* (best for coverage of international religious news) shows that EBSCO understands the needs of students and scholars. There are some omissions of important religious publications; one wishes that *National Catholic Reporter* and Cambridge University Press titles such as *New Testament Studies* and *Religious Studies* were also available in EBSCO's full-text collection.

Some of the full text in the **RPC** is searchable only if you "Expand" your search by checking a box at the bottom of the search page. Depending on the subject, the differences in results can be quite amazing. A search for "Bangalore" as a keyword without including full text yielded 29 results; with the full-text box checked, the same search yielded 298.

The two databases can be combined for searching. This provides links from the citation-only results in **ATLA** to the corresponding full text in the **RPC**. When full text is available from both sources, choices are clearly marked on results and citation pages. The combined search only works well for keyword searching. The differences in biblical citation searching in the two databases make it almost impossible to do combined searching for biblical passages.

The Bottom Line: The **ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials** is the most important indexing resource in religion. For those using the EBSCO version, **EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection** provides an important supplement. Together these products provide a rich source of full text, and when the full text is searchable, it provides an even greater resource. The **ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials** and **EBSCO's Religion & Philosophy Collection** are to be recommended especially for standalone seminaries, theological schools, and colleges with religious studies and philosophy programs that cannot afford access to large, multidisciplinary, full-text databases such as **EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier**.—Clifford Wunderlich, *Pub. Svcs., Andover-Harvard Theological Lib., Harvard Univ.*

*Please note: Since this review was conducted, EBSCO has licensed the full text (PDF) for *National Catholic Reporter*. This content will soon appear in the *Religion & Philosophy Collection*, including current coverage from the publication, and at least ten years of backfile data.