
August 1989

NASA/RECON: Its Unique Resources

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Recommended Citation

Buchan, Ron (1989) "NASA/RECON: Its Unique Resources," *Sci-Tech News*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://jdc.jefferson.edu/scitechnews/vol43/iss3/7>

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NASA/RECON

Its Unique Resources

Presented June 12, 1989 at the
Aerospace Division's panel session entitled,
"On-line Problem Solving in Aerospace and Defense."

When NASA/RECON went online in 1969, it was the government's first major online information retrieval system. The NASA Scientific and Technical Information Facility computerized efforts began in 1962. NASA/RECON has been a leader in the field and now has nearly 3 million records. Several parts of NASA/RECON are available online through DIALOG and NTIS and as CM-ROM products from NTIS licensees. Over one half of NASA/RECON consists of the computerized versions of the two basic abstract journals of aerospace interest — STAR and IAA. STAR or Scientific and Technical Aerospace Reports is produced by the NASA STI Facility. IAA or International Aerospace Abstracts is produced by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and contains journal and commercial literature of aerospace interest. The STAR and IAA files are actually made of two files each, the prime from 1968 to date and the alternate from 1962-1967.

NASA/RECON Information Availability

Of the 29 files available on NASA/RECON, one file, the STAR file is the most available. NTIS has 27 leases where the NTIS STAR file is available: BRS, DIALOG, ORBIT, STN; four foreign systems and individual companies and countries. NTIS online coverage begins with 1964. In addition the NTIS STAR file is accessible on three CD ROM products: OCLC, DIALOG, and SilverPlatter. Coverage begins in 1983. Besides that, the STAR and the IAA files are available through AIAA as the Aerospace Database on DIALOG. This product differs from what is available from NASA/RECON in that it provides only DIALOG features not NASA/RECON features. The powerful frequency command for NASA Thesaurus term frequencies is unique to NASA/RECON and not available on DIALOG. The online query of NASA Thesaurus definitions and Scope Notes is a feature on NASA/RECON that is not available on the Aerospace Database. The ability to create Demand Indexes with subject,

author, corporate sources, and report and accession numbers is a unique feature of NASA/RECON. The Demand Indexes can provide valuable reference tools for specific areas of interest. All terms added to NASA/RECON since 1984 are Retrospectively Indexed. NTIS and AIAA products do not provide this additional important and current information on a timely fashion since the whole file is only updated annually. Corrections that are immediately made available on NASA/RECON are only made once a year on the Aerospace Database.

Unique NASA/RECON Files

The 25 other files on NASA/RECON that are not on the Aerospace Database provide a rich and varied supplement to the basic STAR and IAA files. This material is not always in the traditional printed format. There are 'Work in Progress' files such as the RTOP (Research and Technology Objectives and Plans), the Contract or K file, and the Preview File containing 'forthcoming' NASA formal publications. Additionally a DOD 'Work in progress' file is also on NASA/RECON. These files, some of which have distribution limitations, together amount to over 56,000 items.

Most RECON files are updated as often as daily. The COSMIC or NASA Computer Software File is updated annually. This file, which has a print counterpart available from COSMIC at the University of Georgia, contains over 1,000 computer programs indexed by NASA Thesaurus terms. A small file of a related publication entitled Announcement of Software Resources and containing over 1,500 items was a companion NASA/RECON file of historical interest that is now available only in print form. The print predecessor of COSMIC, Computer Program Abstracts, contains other historical information not in COSMIC.

Computerized data information is available on the Directory of Numerical Databases file which includes access to information about data in both computerized or print format. Currently there are over 1,200 items in the file. In most

cases these are not print products but magnetic tapes and the like.

The Space Commercialization file operates in tandem with a set created by the term "Space Commercialization" and the other files. This file includes space commercialization references not already in NASA/RECON. As such it provides valuable collateral and sometimes primary information on the topic. There are over 8,000 references in the "C" or Space Commercialization file. Over 12,000 additional references may be found in other files under the term "Space Commercialization."

The NACA file is a veritable gold mine of historical information that has often proven to be of current application. The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics was the forerunner of NASA. Virtually all the formal NACA reports are included in this file which amounts to some 110,000 items. Although this is not yet a complete listing of NACA catalogued items, it includes many foreign and elusive items.

Nearly 550,000 book records are accessible in the book file and can be searched at the same time as searching for other literature. Although the last records to the NALNET file (NASA Library Network) were added in October 1986, it remains a valuable source of information especially since 200,000 of these records are NASA held and are tied to NASA Thesaurus terms. Periodical records are in the M file. Since October of 1986, current book records are made available on NASA's Integrated Library System which operates on the Facility's computers but does not reside in NASA/RECON. This integrated system provides bibliographical, circulation and acquisition information to NASA Center libraries. Aptly named the Aerospace Research Information Network or ARIN, it brings NASA's libraries up to the state-of-the-art for large research libraries by using the NOTIS integrated library system.

NASA TechBriefs have been a source of inspiration to scientists and engineers for years. The complete file of these compact sources of technical information are fully available on NASA/RECON and now amount to nearly 14,000 items.

The Library of Congress Aerospace Medicine and Biology file predates and overlaps the STAR and IAA information on this topic in NASA/RECON. The original volumes are not on NASA/RECON but subsequent information was published for a time in the continuing bibliography, Aerospace Medicine and Biology. This

file consists of over 12,000 items and is mostly of historical interest.

There are four safety files in NASA/RECON one of which is virtually a private file for the NASA Safety Office. The ASRDI files (Aerospace Safety R&D Institute) were produced from 1975-76 and consist of three files that act as one. This safety data is specialized but often useful and consists of nearly 12,000 items.

There are four files of limited significance that list reports without abstracts that are deemed either too old or not important enough to be listed in the STAR file. Sometimes these items are still valuable and important for their disciplines. If a document is out of date and yet significant the date can be overridden and and item entered into STAR. Some 200,000 items are available in these files.

The remaining five files have limited distribution and are available only to qualified users. Those wishing further information may contact the NASA STI Facility.

NASA/RECON Printed Tools & Products

The three volume NASA Thesaurus and its Supplements (SP-7064) form an indispensable tool for using NASA/RECON either directly through DIALOG, NTIS or CD ROM products. This reference tool lists over 20,000 NASA Thesaurus terms and use references. The extensive hierarchies list some 160,000 broader, narrower and related term interrelationships in the Hierarchical Listing. Volume 2, the Access Vocabulary, provides over 40,000 access points. The third volume provides over 3,000 definitions and their use references. All told there are over 17 and one half million postings of NASA Thesaurus terms to NASA/RECON records. The semiannual NASA Combined File Postings Statistics Based on the NASA Thesaurus is cumulative and includes postings by NASA Thesaurus term by four file breakdowns: STAR, IAA, NALNET, Other plus a total. This tool is most useful in preparing search strategies. It is published in January and July. The NASA Thesaurus Supplement is published in March and September and includes all terms and new hierarchies and definitions as well as the Access Vocabulary supplement and changes. The monthly STI Bulletin publishes new terms on a regular basis.

Other tools such as the NASA/RECON User's Reference Manual and the NASA/RECON Primer are indispensable for using NASA/RECON. A quarterly Corporate Source Author-

ity List is available and it is kept up-to-date by monthly lists.

In addition to tools for more effectively using NASA/RECON, there are printed products, chief of which are the semimonthly abstract journals STAR and IAA. Two SDI services are available. SCAN based on predetermined categories and UPDATE which utilizes customized searches for more specific needs. SCAN and UPDATE keep users aware on a regular basis of new material of interest to them. The Continuing Bibliography series provides a broader sweep of new information often on a monthly basis. Such titles as Aerospace Medicine and Biology, Aeronautical Engineering, Earth Resources and Patents Abstracts Bibliography provide excellent examples of such current awareness publications.

NASA/RECON provides the most complete and varied source of information on topics of aerospace interest. Because of the selection criteria the database contains scientific and technical information that extends beyond a narrow definition of aerospace interest.

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