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Competition for Mergent? A Brief Look at Bureau van Dijk's Osiris Database

Is there a good competitor to the Mergent Online database? Around in Europe since the 1980's, Bureau van Dijk is trying hard to make waves in the U.S. with its numerous company information databases. Their Osiris database seems to be a viable competitor to Mergent with much of the same features. In September, I sat down with a Bureau van Dijk vendor representative and took a look at Osiris.

According to their Web site, Osiris covers over 30,000 listed and 8,000 unlisted companies; however, their representative said it covers over 42,000 companies in total. Of these, approximately 8,000 are U.S. companies. [*Editor's note: As of June 2007, Osiris covers about 46,000 companies with 11,000 of them U.S. companies.*] In comparison, Mergent provides coverage for 15,000 U.S. and 20,000 international public companies. Osiris contains much the same company content as Mergent including company overviews, financials, ratios, SEC filings, annual reports, and country of origin information. Company and industry information includes reports provided by Datamonitor. Country reports are provided by the Economist Intelligence Unit's Country Profiles and Country Outlooks. Stock data includes prices, price trends, betas, equity prices, and volatility. Prices are current, daily, weekly, monthly, and annually with annual and monthly prices going back about seven years and daily and weekly prices back about a year. Ratings are from S&P, Fitch's, and Moody's. SEC filings go back approximately six years, as compared with Mergent, which goes back only six months.

As far as other features, reports in Osiris, like Mergent, are exportable to Excel and there is the ability to create company reports based on selected criteria. Osiris, additionally, provides the ability to graph several reports including the balance sheet, income statement, corporate structure, "evolution of the stock price across time" and "past evolution of the ratings." The "past evolution of the ratings" graph for AMR Corporation nicely illustrates how ratings from S&P have changed over time from 1997 to 2003.

Osiris's searchability and interface has rather a "rough" look and is somewhat cumbersome to use. Mergent definitely has a cleaner more polished interface. Osiris does, however, provide a variety of search criteria including the ability to search by geography, industry, employees,

ratings, earnings estimate, and ownership data. As I was navigating Osiris, I had the foreboding feeling that I would be spending hours trying to explain this database to students and faculty, but in actuality it's not any worse than the unwieldiness of many other databases.

So, is it a deal? Maybe, maybe not. It's definitely worth a look-see. I recommend contacting Bureau Van Dyke to further investigate this product as well as their many other database offerings. They are definitely a contender in the field. They have sales offices in New York and San Francisco.

Web site: <http://www.bvdep.com>