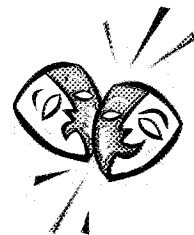


péter's picks & pans



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Digital Dissertations

National Criminal Justice Reference Service Abstracts

Atlapeia

The picks include the free Digital Dissertations database (a subset of Dissertation Abstracts) from ProQuest, and the National Criminal Justice Reference Service Abstracts. The pan is the Atlapeia collection of country profiles that appears as a strongly recommended site in many directories and subject guides in spite of the fact that it is incredibly outdated and there are far better free alternatives on the Web.

(a.k.a. Bell & Howell Information and Learning, a.k.a. UMI, a.k.a. University Microfilms) is Dissertation Abstracts International. It has been a staple in academic libraries for decades, first in print, then online, and finally in CD-ROM format. Its latest incarnation is Digital Dissertations (<http://www.lib.umi.com/dissertations>), a (partially) free subset covering the dissertations and theses prepared in the current and the previous year. The full database goes back to the 1870s and offers citations (for dissertations since 1980, it also offers abstracts). You might think that the most recent two years would be a small subset. Yet there are almost 50,000 items as of September 2000. (Note that if you are a subscriber to ProQuest, you have access to the full file of 1.6 million titles, and that the file on Dialog (File 35) is not updating properly,

containing only 21,700 records for 1999-2000.)

Digital Dissertations does not have puny citation-only records, but entries that also offer indexing terms, substantial abstracts (around 350 words), and the first 24 pages of most of the doctoral dissertations and masters theses in PDF format. This is a big deal for several reasons. One is that most of the dissertations and theses are of primary interest within a year or two after their submission. By definition, they need to show novelty, not just regurgitate what has been written about the subject. I don't claim that all of them are that admirable, but I found many promising dissertations in library and information science and in computer science. I am sure the situation holds true in other disciplines. Searches on such hot topics as human-computer interaction, knowledge management, and telemedicine



the picks

DIGITAL DISSERTATIONS

One of the most traditional and well-known assets of ProQuest

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Search - basic BASIC ADVANCED HELP PRICING

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0453 in Subject (SU) Search

and in Choose a Field

and in Choose a Field

Date from to (e. g. 1985)

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Large Result Set PRICING

Your search SU(0453) produced 1585 citations.

You may view all 1585 citations. This may be a very intensive operation, and may be slow in loading.

We recommend you refine your search, using variant terms, or adding more limiting terms.

There are 1,585 dissertations and theses about women's studies whose subject code is 0453.

The search template of Digital Dissertations offers a number of search options and their combinations.

brought up dozens of relevant items. My search on data mining yielded 38 items. Keep in mind that library science and information science are not the most written-about of fields. There are only 309 items for the current and past years, but that is 309 more than any of the fee-based library and information science databases have for the period. (Library Literature and Information Science Abstracts claim to have records about dissertations, but the few they have are very old.) In computer science, there are records for 1,387 dissertations and theses, but it is still behind women's studies which boasts 1,585 items in this free subset.

Not all the records have the 24-page PDF preview component. ProQuest is converting about 10,000 titles per week to PDF and expects to be caught up by the end of 2000. Some of the shortest theses, between 26 and 32 pages, are missing the PDF component because it would be the entire document. The 24-page PDF excerpts act as teasers for dissertations that can run over 200 pages. Those excerpts are more than sufficient to decide if it is worth to order the entire dissertation. The

Table of Contents and the List of Figures pages themselves are informative, and the remaining 20 pages suffice to judge the relevance of the document.

When it comes to ordering, you have several options. The PDF version is instant gratification, and for a relevant document of 150-300 pages it is a bargain at \$21.50. An unbound paper copy, sent priority mail, coasts \$29.95, a softcover paper copy is \$38.50, and a hardcover paper copy is \$46. None of the traditional online services that carry Dissertation Abstracts offers full text, let alone page image version. The new online service, Contentville, that provides free citations and—for post-1980 dissertations—abstracts, also offers dissertations in digital ASCII formats, and dissertations from 1997 also in PDF format through a click-through to ProQuest. Contentville's price for the PDF format is a little higher (\$23.50). The softbound paper copies are much higher (\$57.50) than in Digital Dissertations.

Searching Digital Dissertations is easy. You can browse the subject tree to choose the appropriate disciplines or broad subject categories and the index of degree-granting schools. You

can search the bibliographic records by a number of criteria and combinations. This excellent service from ProQuest deserves credit for the variety of content and tools needed to build digital libraries.

Interestingly, just as I was finishing this review, a discussion flared up on JESSE, an open library and information science education discussion group (jesse@listserv.utk.edu) about the morality of selling the dissertations. Because Bell & Howell pays the authors who can be traced down for every copy sold, it is a much more fair solution than the publishers of academic journals have—they charge an arm and a leg for reprints without paying a penny to the authors. Moreover, the authors of dissertations retain their copyright, which is not the case with scholarly articles.



THE NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE (NCJRS) ABSTRACTS

The number of people who get involved in one way or another with the criminal justice system keeps increasing. This implies that the need for information about crimes, misdemeanors, felonies, and justice keeps increasing, too. The NCJRS Abstracts database (<http://www.ncjrs.org/database.htm>) is a rich store of information about more than 150,000 articles, research reports, books, statistics, and other government documents related to every aspects of criminology published since the early 1970s. It has been available on CD-ROM and Dialog (File 21 that, due to technical difficulties, has not been updated since September 1999 as of September 2000) for a price (online, it's \$1.35 per DialUnit and \$0.40 per record). Now it is available for all without a price tag on the Web, and it's up-to-date.

The records have excellent value-added information except for the



NCJRS Abstracts Database - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: http://www.ncjrs.org/.../RECORD/VOL/ID/16/SUBJECT/.../ARTICLE/NUMBER/16/SUBJECT/PERCENT/...

Abstracts Database

Abstract

Previous Document Next Document

NCJ Number: 167548

Title: Crystal Methamphetamine (Methamphetamine) in Hawaii: The TCP Man Comes to Forefront

Journal: Security Journal Volume 7 Issue 2 (Fall 1996) Pages: 117-128

Author: C.E. Sussner, J. Nagata

Format: article

Publication Date: 1996

Pages: 12

Type: Issue overview

Origin: United States

Language: English

Note: DCC

Annotation: This article explores Hawaii's multicultural drug scene and the emergence of a powerful and dangerous super-drug called "ICE."

Abstract: The rapidly increasing street drug of choice in Hawaii is crystal methamphetamine, more commonly referred to as "ICE." ICE first appeared in Hawaii in 1993. Within a few years, abuse of the drug was a major problem. ICE is a derivative of amphetamine, a stimulant that affects the central nervous system by accelerating its activity. The authors detail the history and development of amphetamine, and then focus on its evolution in the high-powered crystal form of methamphetamine in several manifestations and potentials. Also discussed are the manufacture, distribution, regulation, and enforcement pertaining to ICE. Described as well are the administration, effects, sources, and the potential for violence created by the illegal use of this stimulant. Methamphetamine is listed as a Schedule II or "dangerous drug" in Hawaii under Chapter 329 of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act. The trend in Hawaii parallels that of the mainland, in that a "positive approach" to substance abuse is still being used. Annually, only approximately 2,000 adult drug abusers in Hawaii are treated, with a budget of approximately \$6 million for substance abuse. Treatment and rehabilitation programs for juveniles are limited in Hawaii. Laws and law enforcement provide only a small component of the comprehensive solution necessary to abate the demand for ICE. A comprehensive program that encompasses the family unit, education, and recreation, as well as the rehabilitation of drug abusers, should be established and maintained in Hawaii. 33 references.

Main Term: Drug information

Index Term: Drug laws; Amphetamines; Drug effects; Drug law enforcement; Drug manufacturing-production; Hawaiian Islands

Previous Document Next Document

A typical NCJRS record contains the normal bibliographic data and a substantial abstract.

very redundant sale information. Beyond the bibliographic citation and a short annotation, the records have unusually long and informative abstracts. In addition, about 1,500 records also have the source documents in ASCII, HTML, and/or PDF format in excellent quality.

The search software is based on the Excalibur engine that allows several field-specific searches, but its most impressive feature is Pattern searching, a sounds-like search option. This comes in very handy when you don't know the exact spelling of the word. It really works. Instead of typing the correct term methamphetamine, I entered metaphetamine and it retrieved the records that had the correct spelling of the word in spite of my omitting two letters. What's more, it could find records with the appropriate spelling when the search term, metafetamine, had three typos. The concept-searching option is not nearly as useful because it occasionally drops one of the words from the query. The query screen could be made more compact to reduce scrolling, and the back-and-forth navigation should also be improved. However, these are minor things considering the value presented.

NCJRS Abstracts Database

Search Results

Your Query found 54 Documents

1. **Microcrystallographic Differentiation of 3,4-Methylenedioxymphetamine and Related Amphetamine Derivatives**
NCJ Number: 130224
[Abstract](#)
Publication Date: 1991
2. **Methamphetamine: A Growing Domestic Threat**
NCJ Number: 164243
[Abstract](#)
Publication Date: 1996
3. **Recreational Drugs: Current Trends in the 90s**
NCJ Number: 179817
[Abstract](#)
Publication Date: 12/1998



the pan

ATLAPEDIA

Atlapedia (<http://www.atlapedia.com>) is the product of Latimer Clarke Corporation Pty Ltd., an Australian company. It is unusually protective of its content, especially considering its poor quality. Beyond the usual copyright statement, it has a long legal notice telling you what you may not do with the data found in Atlapedia. I don't think that you would want to do any of it, as the database is grossly outdated. The legal-eagling is also a reason for me not including any illustration. Go to the site and see for yourself the disappointing country profiles.

The Pattern search option allows good retrieval even in case of brutally misspelled search terms like metafetamine for methamphetamine.

Then again, hundreds of Web sites must like Atlapedia as they provide links to it, oblivious of the fact that a collection of country profiles featuring 8-10-year-old demographic and economical statistics is not exactly useful. Although population estimates are given for 1997, the rest of the data is mostly from the early 1990s. Even worse, the longest part of each country profile, the modern history overview, ends in 1993 for the majority of the countries, and for some the latest political information is from 1988.

The entry about Serbia mentions that in May 1981 there were uprisings by the Albanian ethnic population of Kosovo that again resurfaced in 1988 and 1989. That's the last word about Kosovo, even though it saw far more than uprisings.

The entry about Indonesia ends with Suharto's modest concessions in 1993. You don't learn about his fall, the country's plummeting into political and economical chaos, or the handling of the independence referendum in East Timor in recent years. Nor would you learn from

Atlapedia about the massacre of more than 800,000 Tutsi civilians. The modern history of Rwanda in Atlapedia ends in 1993. The genocide started the following year after the plane with the presidents of Burundi and Rwanda on board was shot down.

The users who read the entry about Sierra Leone, another inferno, would know nothing of its current condition and, seeing the incredible \$18,000,000 income from tourism in 1980, could believe it a nice honeymoon destination. Not exactly. It is suicidal to go to a country that can be hardly considered a state due to the total lack of any kind of organized governmental activity.

The history of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) ends with the introduction of the zaire, the local currency. Since that time, one of the greediest despots was run out of town, and another dictator came into power who changed the name of the country and of the currency on his first day in office.

I cannot fathom why anyone would waste time with such a database

when far more current and comprehensive country profiles are freely available from such sources as the CIA World Factbook 2000 Information Please World Almanac, Britannica, the Concise Encarta Encyclopedia, or the 2000 edition of the Columbia Encyclopedia. Atlapedia's maps are often difficult to read, and the aggressive watermarks don't help the legibility.

According to its home page, "Atlapedia Online contains full color physical and political maps as well as key facts and statistics on countries of the world." It goes on encouraging you: "Don't forget to Bookmark this page now. Why not tell your teachers and friends about this site too." I am afraid too many have already done so. Don't join them; you would not be doing a favor to your friends and to the teachers of children.

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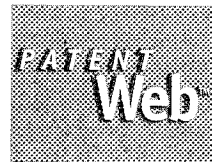


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