

Péter's picks & pans



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The picks include a MEDLINE version from Germany and a topical MEDLINE subset covering alternative medicine. Ever since the launch of the very impressive and free PubMed, it's been hard to justify other free MEDLINEs for a pick, but the German version and the National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine's CAM Citation Index deserve to be picked. The pan is a site that has the guts to call itself "thereference.com" when it consists of merely a few slapdash articles that don't even qualify as half-baked. This does not prevent many compilers from including it among their recommended reference Web sites, which in turn are copied by those who can't imagine life without creating and publishing link lists but not bothering to check what they link to.



the picks

German Medical
Forum's MEDLINE

CAM Citation Index

Thereference.com

GERMAN MEDICAL FORUM'S MEDLINE

You don't need to speak a word of German to use the German Medical Forum's MEDLINE (<http://www.medline.de>). Except for the topmost navigational line and the ads, everything is in English, since this site is powered by the KnowledgeFinder (KF) software from Aries, Inc. in North Andover, Massachusetts. This software has been my favorite for a long time because of its outstanding smart search features based on substantial medical linguistic research that go well beyond what other very capable informational retrieval programs such as those of Ovid or PubMed do. Now there is a free unabridged MEDLINE version featuring this high-IQ KF software.

PubMed has had the smartest program for searching free MEDLINE, outperforming many programs used by commercial MEDLINE versions. For example, PubMed automatically adds the preferred MeSH term to the user's query behind the scenes. For the query, *kidney stones* PubMed adds *kidney calculi* as a MeSH search term. Similarly, if the user enters the term *postpartum depression* or the British term *puerperal depression*, PubMed discreetly adds the preferred MeSH term *depression, postpartum* to the query. It also maps brand names of drugs into their generic equivalent.

KnowledgeFinder goes further than this. It recognizes the spelling variants in British and American English, and automatically modifies the query—also behind the scenes—by complementing it with the appropriate terms. So searching for *pediatric multiple sclerosis* will also find the British version, *paediatric multiple sclerosis*. Does it make a difference? Definitely. The difference is no records in PubMed for the past five years versus a dozen highly relevant records in the KF version of MEDLINE. Of course, professional searchers probably would accommodate the variants in their strategy,

but in these days of disintermediation, end-users are likely to ignore the golden rules of professional searching, and just type in familiar terms.

The difference is much bigger when the linguistic and relevance ranking wizardry of KF is applied to a query of multiple words. The query *anaesthesia malpractice suits* finds a mere two records in PubMed (one French and one German article), while KF yields 200 records (the output limit in KF). At a quick glance 90% of them are relevant or highly relevant. It is quite telling that the 199th entry in the relevance-ordered list is "The Legal Responsibility of the Anaesthetist" with a 60% relevancy rank. I venture that most users would rank its relevance at 100%. At least seven of the last ten records of the 200 are spot on. In case you are wondering if the article "Death associated with anaesthesia" discusses the legal aspects, you should be convinced when you note that *malpractice* and *anesthesia* are both major MeSH terms in this record.

The reason for this impressive result is the inclusion of synonyms like *professional negligence* for *malpractice*, along with several British and American variants of the root term *anesthesia*. PubMed retrieves only eight records even when using both British and American spellings, so it is clear there are more tricks involved than a simple equivalency table.

Another advantage of the KF version is that, for about 1,500 journals, there is a document delivery option. For many journals the table of contents, and for some journals the full text of the article is linked to the MEDLINE record and is available free of charge even for non-subscribers. It is a nice touch that the articles in the table of contents can be sorted by author, title, or page number order, and in the two formats. Subscribers' privileges vary from publisher to publisher, and the KF software is ready to offer all the options for password holders. It is a perfect example for demonstrating how the software features of a free version can give many commercial vendors a run for their money.

CAM CITATION INDEX

The name CAM Citation Index (<http://156.40.39.5/>) is somewhat

Enter complete topical search query below:

paediatric multiple sclerosis

e.g. "D3 helmets reduce injury in bicycle and motorcycle accidents"

Author(s)

Journal(s)

Other Terms

ENGLISH only ?

ABSTRACTS only ?

REVIEWS only ?

PREMEDIUM exclude ?

Optional Search Settings:

Date Range: 2000 to 2001

Summaries Per Page: 20

Logic: Fuzzy


Word Variants: Yes

Display By: Relevance

Use Concept Mapping
e.g. "heart attack" maps to "myocardial infarction"

Use Author Name Truncation ?
e.g. "Smith" matches "Smith A", "Smith AB", etc.


Advanced thesaurus and Boolean options can be accessed by downloading the Knowledge Finder client software.



Thanks to its use of knowledgeFinder software, this search on the German Medical Forum's version of MEDLINE will retrieve British and American spellings, plus amplify it with other appropriate terms.

#	Relevance	Abstract included	Select all	
190	60%	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Whitmore HC Jr Medicolegal considerations for office-based anesthesia in dentistry. Dent Clin North Am (United States), Apr 1999, 43(2) p361-72, vii, 373-7
191	60%	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Domino KB, Posner KL, Caplan RA, et al Awareness during anesthesia: a closed claims analysis. Anesthesiology (United States), Apr 1999, 90(4) p1053-61
194	60%	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Earnikel W [Physician's liability for anesthesia damages (letter)] Dtsch Med Wochenschr (Germany, West), Aug 18 1978, 103(33) p1311
196	60%	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Death associated with anaesthesia [letter] Br J Anaesth (England), Aug 1977, 49(8) p840-1
197	60%	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sheppard GA Medical - legal update. Anesth Prog (United States), May-Jun 1977, 24(3) p96
198	60%	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Blank H, Hempelmann G, Brinke G [Inadvertent intra-arterial injection] Anesthesiol Intensivmed Prax (Germany, West), Feb 1977, 13(1) p97-102
199	60%	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Havard JD The legal responsibility of the anaesthetist. Anaesthesia (England), Jan 1977, 32(1) p25-30

- NEW SEARCH -



It is indicative of how awesomely relevant the resulting set is if the absolutely pertinent 199th item on the list—sorted by decreasing relevance—can earn a merely 60% relevancy score.

misleading. It is not a citation index of Complementary and Alternative Medicine, but a full-fledged abstracting/indexing database with about 200,000 records. You will find not merely the bibliographic citations for CAM-

related articles but also the full records with abstracts and many other value-added fields from the MEDLINE database. On the other hand, you will not find citations within the records (as you do in the Citation Index database

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY & ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

CAM Citation Index

[About the CAM CCI](#)

[Search Results](#) | [Search](#) | [Expert Search](#) | [Browse](#) | [Help](#)

Your search returned **63** records.

Showing results 1-10. Search took 0.273 seconds.
[How are results interpreted?](#)

Display	Citation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 Gysin T. "[Clinical hypnotherapy/self-hypnosis for unspecified, chronic and episodic headache without migraine and other defined headaches in children and adolescents]. [German]". <i>Forschende Komplementarmedizin</i> 1999 Feb;6 Suppl 1:44-6
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 Narduzzi KJ, Nolan RP, Reesor K, Jackson T, Spanos NP, Hayward AA, Scott HA. "Preliminary investigation of associations of illness schemata and treatment-induced reduction in headaches." <i>Psychological Reports</i> 1998 Feb;82(1):299-307
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Dworkin SF. "Behavioral and educational modalities. [Review] [24 refs]". <i>Oral Surg Oral Med Oral Pathol Oral Radiol Endod</i> 1997 Jan;83(1):128-33
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 ter Kuile MM, Spinhoven P, Linssen AC, van Houwelingen HC. "Cognitive coping and appraisal processes in the treatment of chronic headaches." <i>Pain</i> 1996 Feb;64(2):257-64
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 Coe WC, Peterson P, Gwynn M. "Expectations and sequelae to hypnosis: initial findings." <i>Am J Orthopsychiatry</i> 1996 Jul;66(3):249

The results screen for the 63 records retrieved for the query on headache and hypnotherapy.

Select a CAM Topic
 Each topic window is combined as an AND search, and ALL is the default for each window.

Diseases
 Eczema
 Hay Fever
 Headache
 Hepatitis C
 Insomnia

Methods
 Biorefeedback
 Chelation Therapy
 Hypnotherapy
 Imagery
 Music Therapy

Systems
 All
 Anthroposophical Medicine
 Ayurvedic Medicine
 Chinese Traditional Medicine
 Chiropractic

Report Type
 All
 Basic Science, Laboratory Research
 Descriptive Studies, Case Reports, Surveys
 Health Services Research
 Observational Studies

Limit by Date
 Find citations from (earliest) 1963 to (latest) 2000

Items listed in the four category windows of CAM Citation Index represent a variety of terms culled by experts.

family of ISI or in the new e-psyche database).

The CAM database records represent a subset of the MEDLINE database, so you may wonder what's the big deal when there are so many free and good MEDLINE versions on the Web. True, but many users are quite intimidated by the full MEDLINE of ten million records. Alternatively, there is the free Combined Health Information Database (CHID) dedicated

to complementary and alternative medicine, although with a much smaller subset than CAM. True, but the CAM Citation Index has a special browsing feature that makes it very powerful and, at the same time, exceptionally user-friendly for those who have a hard time figuring out how to formulate an adequate query.

Readers of *ONLINE* have no problem with this phase of searching, but novice and casual searchers often have a hard time entering a query using the most appropriate words and search operators. Natural language systems and mapping user queries certainly help in this phase (assuming that the software is good in ranking a large result set by relevance and that the user entered a term that the software is able to map into a MeSH term).

The browsing feature of CAM is a visually aided model of post-coordinated terms representing four aspects of a search: disease, therapeutic method, therapeutic system, and document type. For each of these, there is a scroll-down menu, listing terms (not necessarily MeSH terms) for the category. The user may choose a term from one or more of the categories,

that will be combined in an AND relationship.

It is a cinch to locate the 14 items that discuss the use of Ayurvedic therapy for arthritis or the 63 items about hypnotherapy for headaches. The results are guaranteed to be of high relevance, and the browse mode often beats the expert search mode, particularly in recall. The keyword search *hypnosis AND headache* found 42 records, and the same query for these two words in the abstract field found only 20 records. This clearly shows that the items listed in the category windows of the browse mode represent a variety of terms culled by experts. Even experienced searchers may not think of all the appropriate terms when doing an adhoc search, and may appreciate this smart menuing, and behind-the-scenes pre-packaging of terms describing a concept.

The nomenclature is undoubtedly incomplete, but it can be easily fixed. There should be many more diseases or conditions included where complementary and alternative medicine has been applied in the past, such as gout, tendonitis, various infectious diseases, smoking, and stress. The same is true for the methods category. If art therapy appears on the list of selected methods, then aromatherapy should be also included, as it is getting attention in mainstream medicine.

These enhancements can be easily done, and the advanced search options of the CAM software can help overcome these, hopefully temporary, limitations. For example, using the query *smoking AND acupuncture, OR stress AND aromatherapy* can quickly find many relevant records. The basic search, however, does not work correctly. The query *smoking AND acupuncture* retrieved 500 records (the maximum allowed by the software), and the results clearly show that the software does an OR operation whether you use the AND operator or not, and the result is full of records in the top ranked position that have only one of the two search words.

In spite of the deficiencies, and of my skepticism about many of the healing methods, CAM shows a very useful complementary and alternative approach to accessing a specific domain of a very large database.

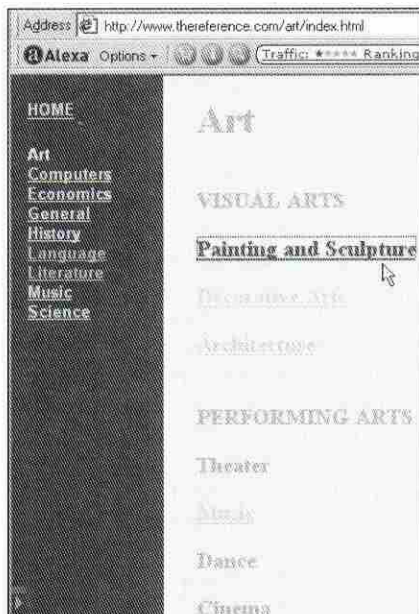


the pan

THE REFERENCE

The Reference (<http://www.the-reference.com>) is quite an ambitious name for a Web site, and many real Internet reference gurus would kill to have such a good URL. That's about the only positive thing I can say about this sorry site. It is just another effort by someone to create an encyclopedia on his lunch break. To see some fine examples for this panned site, just go to <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~jacso/extra/>.

It is obvious from the outline that the author is planning to cover a broad spectrum from Arts to Computers to Languages and Science, but looking up the few dozen articles that make up this resource suggests that the "editor" will need a great many lunch breaks. It is one thing that the article about painting and sculpture stops at the Greek and Roman period after short passages on prehistoric and Egyptian art. It is another question that the tiny



Thereference.com encyclopedia's coverage of Art is divided in its outline into Visual Arts and Performing Arts, but only the entry on Music actually exists under Performing Arts.

Art: Paint and Sculpture

HISTORY

Prehistoric Art

The world's most ancient works of art date form 30 000 BC. This is vastly earlier than the first written records and means that the greater part of art history is, in fact, prehistoric. It was during the prehistoric period that virtually all the major artistic media evolved, including drawing, painting, sculptures, ceramics and, arguably, architecture.

Egyptian Art

Early civilizations flourished along the great river valleys of the Nile in Egypys, adn the Trigris and Euphrates from Anatolia (present-day Turkey), through Syria into Mesapotomia (present-day Iraq). The rivers linked these regions in an extensive trade network that also encompassed Persia (present-day Iran) to the east, but variations in climate, geography, natural resources and population resulted in corresponding variations in artistic traditions.

The article about painting and sculpture stops at the Greek and Roman period after a short passage on the era of prehistoric era, and the fragment on Egyptian Art is in need of heavy editing.

fragments that exist seem to be in need of heavy editing.

Don't get me wrong; I am not losing sleep over this site *per se*. Anyone has the right to have delusions, and at least this is physically not harmful. I would not bother to pan it, had I not seen references to this site from other sites that claim to list the best Web reference sources.

If you make a search for www.the-reference.com as the target of the link you will find many individuals and organizations that recommend this site. There's an Internet Service Provider like BrandX, the Streetwise site (a project to help the homeless), and an academic, apparently from the Weizman Institute, whose published bookmark collection includes this page next to a link to a paper about molecular genetics. A technical writer found thereference.com site so good that he lists it as the very first entry among his favorites. The site that claims to be Somalia's virtual home on the Internet, manages to look more like a bad foster home by picking this practically non-existent encyclopedia for inclusion in its half-dozen reference sources. The Somali site owner also swallowed hook, line, and sinker the claim of this source, and goes

tautological in stating that this was the first encyclopedia on the Web. That's the way a myth is born and perpetuated.

I may be amused by this human folly, but Mr. Drudge (the father of the creator of the Drudge Report) may not think it so funny when his very good Refdesk site is named for the link to the thereference site. The interesting twist is that at least three citing sites make the very same mistake, obviously copying content from other sites without looking at what they recommend. This insanity is hideously contagious. If you doubt me, just look up the thousands of links to the previously panned, utterly inferior Free Internet Encyclopedia while many good reference sites go unnoticed. Such inane links give a bad name to the Web, and students, who are the target audience for many Web sites, will just keep watching The Jerry Springer Show and believe that all knowledge comes from that source.

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Comments? Email letters to the editor to Marydee@xmission.com.