

péter's picks & pans



Péter Jacsó
University of Hawaii

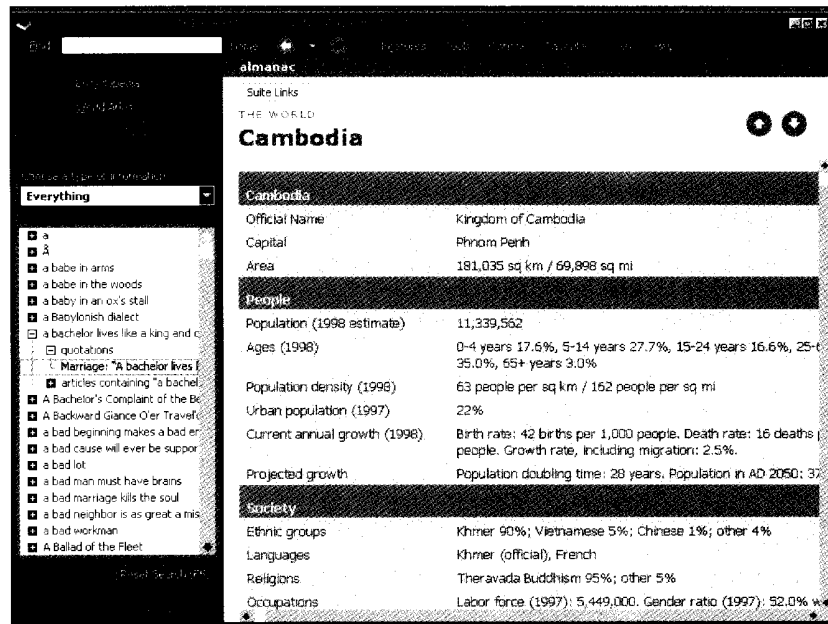
Encarta DVD Reference Suite 2000

Ad*Access

Yep

The picks include the DVD-ROM version of Encarta Reference Suite 2000, where textual and multimedia content is graced by a superbly designed interface that features very good browsing and search functions, along with excellent navigational and display features. The other pick is a unique image database of advertisements from the first part of the 1900s.

The pan is the directory of Web sites on the Yep portal that makes unrealistic promises for pinpointing sites based on quality and popularity, but delivers incredibly pathetic results.



Clicking on the Suite Link icon takes you to the most detailed country map imaginable.



the picks

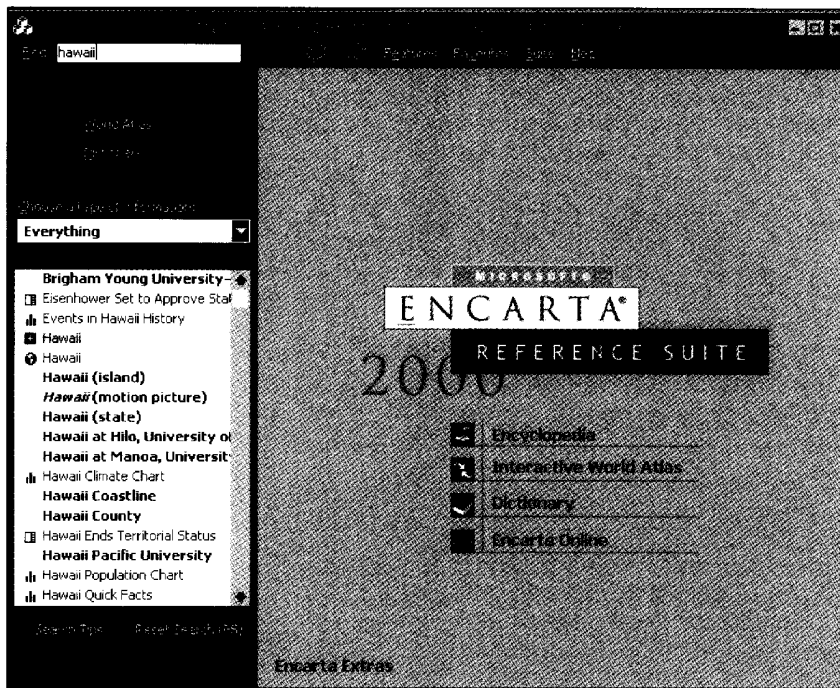
ENCARTA DVD REFERENCE SUITE 2000

The 1999 CD-ROM edition of this product was already one of my earlier picks (*DATABASE*, June 1999), but the year 2000 edition deserves to be picked again. It is the best deal in the entire CD-ROM/DVD-ROM market. With the mail-in rebate, it costs

a mere \$65 (or even less), which could easily justify the purchase of a DVD-ROM drive. It has four components: *Encarta Encyclopedia Deluxe 2000*, *Encarta Interactive World Atlas*, the brand-new *Encarta World English Dictionary*, and free Internet access until the end of 2000 to *Encarta Online Deluxe Encyclopedia*. In itself, *Encarta Online Deluxe Encyclopedia* would be a \$50 value and worth it, even with the free online version of

Encyclopedia Britannica (<http://www.britannica.com>).

I can't even try to give details in this limited space about the wealth of these components. Rather, I encourage you to check out my heavily illustrated walk-through review of the CD-ROM versions of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Interactive World Atlas*, and the *Dictionary at Péter's Digital Reference Shelf*, which is part of Gale's Reference Reviews (<http://www.galegroup.com/reference/>)



The query term finds items in all the components of the Reference Suite.

reference.htm). Suffice it to say here that this gem has been significantly enhanced, and the integration and synergy among the individual components has been strengthened since the last edition. Of the 65,000 excellent articles, several hundred are new or revised. The number of photos increased from 21,000 to 23,500—and these illustrative materials are of high quality. The sidebars featuring contemporary documents and transcripts of speeches have increased from 2,000 to 2,450. There is now a separate Archive with more than 10,000 contemporary documents of milestone events. The very well-chosen Web links now number about 31,500 sites.

The former Virtual Globe changed not only its name but also its appearance to rhyme perfectly with that of the Encyclopedia. I find it simply awesome. Beyond the variety of map styles and the breadth of its significantly enhanced gazetteer function, the handling of statistical charts and tables is a masterpiece in visualization and customization.

The *World English Dictionary*, the first newly written English dictionary in 30 years, is far more than a dictionary. It is a first-class reference collection that includes the *Encarta*

Book of Quotations, the original *Rogel's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, the *Encarta 2000 Almanac*, the *Encarta Manual of Style and Usage*, and the *Microsoft Press Computer and Internet Dictionary*. While the Encyclopedia and the Atlas now have the same look and feel with the splendid Content pages, the Dictionary sports a somewhat different design.

The biggest advantage of the DVD version is not in the extra multimedia materials, but rather in the very good integration of the three products, and those three with the *Online Deluxe Encyclopedia* (and Atlas). When you look up the article about Shakespeare in the Encyclopedia, there is a Suite Link to his quotations in the Dictionary. When you look up the vital statistics of Cambodia in the Almanac, there is a Suite Link to the most detailed map imaginable in the Atlas. Currently, there are 16,000 Suite Links in the DVD-ROM version—and it could be easily quadrupled. Then again, it may not be urgently needed, because

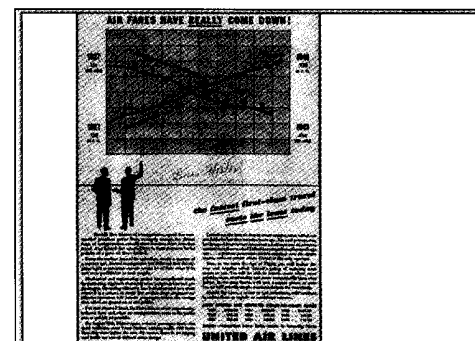
Small but high-quality image with impeccable meta-data about an ad

the Find function brings up all the relevant entries (and a few irrelevant ones) from all the components in the search phase. With all the impressive advancements in the Web-based reference sources, this gem is a keeper.



AD*ACCESS

Duke University's Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, as part of its Digital Scriptorium project, has made a very useful contribution to the growing digital library of academic special collections. Ad*Access (<http://SCRIPTORIUM.LIB.DUKE.EDU/ADACCESS>) is a database of more than 7,000 ads that appeared in U.S. and Canadian journals and newspapers in the first half of the 20th century. The major subject topics include World War II, transportation, radio, television, and beauty/personal hygienic products and services. To put the ads into proper perspective, the editors have created a timeline for the period covered, listing the major events in the national and international scene of politics, government, science, technology,



Enlarge (729p) | Enlarge 2x(150dpi)

Ad Number: T2147
Headline: Air Fares Have Really Come Down
Date: 1945
Company: United Air Lines
Product: Fare Reduction
Publication: New York Times
Publication Type: Newspaper
Number of Pages: 1
Target Audience: Consumer

Subjects:

Transportation--Airlines

The Advanced Query template offers field-specific searching and filtering options.

humanities, business, arts, entertainment, and sport. All the categories are subdivided by time period; the radio & television category also has topical subcategories. You can browse these sections to see the headline (or as I would call it, the tag line), and the publication year of each ad classified under the chosen heading. The record consists of a relatively small image with impeccable cataloging information that includes the record identifier, headline, date, company, product, publication type and date, target audience, and subject headings.

A full-page ad of United Air Lines (as it was called in 1945) from the *New York Times* tells more about airfare pricing, pre- and postwar airline transportation costs, and air travel conventions (people dressed up to fly) than a 10-page study would. The images can be enlarged to 72 dpi and 150 dpi sizes. It takes some time to download them, but it is worth the wait. Reading the substantial blurbs accompanying many of the ads, it occurred to me how interesting it would be to feed these images to an OCR program to make an index of the full text.

In addition to browsing the ads, you can also search them. The Simple Search template allows searching by a single keyword in a specific field, such as date, headline, company, product, publication name, testimonial, famous people, type of publication, target audience, artist's name, country of publication, or all available fields. You can also search on Illustration/Special Features. These include comics, cartoons, drawings, Africans/African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Children, Sports, and Military images in the ad's illustrations. Other options include ads in French or Spanish, and ads that contain coupons, premiums, or contests. The excellent help file provides detailed guidelines. The Complex Search allows you to add an additional field, combined with Boolean AND or OR operator. With Complex Search, you can also limit the fields by type of illustration and special feature and by topic category.

A search for Northwest ads in the 1950s yielded 102 hits related to the airline (some of them duplicates or almost duplicates). Within that set,

there are 28 ads with Pacific Islanders, 40 with African Americans, 56 with Asians, 41 with Native Americans, and 30 with Middle Eastern/Arabs in the illustrative material. It is interesting just to look at the breakdown of the result list by ethnic groups and main category or ethnic groups and type of transportation medium. The roles these ethnic groups play in the ads can be figured out only by looking at the ad itself. It would have been useful to include, when possible, the occupation of the minority (passenger, porter, stewardess). The editors carefully mention that some of the contemporaneous language in the ads may be offensive today.

Ad*Access is a unique database without precedence (University of Illinois has an ad database but without illustrations), and will make a wonderful resource for researchers in sociology, ethnic and women studies, and, of course, marketing and advertisements.



the pan

YEP

Portals have been the rage on the Web, so it's no wonder that new projects also aim at that market. Yep (<http://www.yep.com>) claims to be a new generation of Web portal that brings you unique search results. So far that is true; its search results *are* unique—in their irrelevance. It also claims to be the first search engine to base its results on Quality and/or Popularity. Many would argue with that, but my bone of contention has more to do with how Yep determines quality and popularity. It sounds scientific and high-tech, but it is simply inane—as proven by results. It may impress people that Yep uses “the collective consciousness of the Internet community” to “track and follow the surfing habits of millions of people

each day," but much is lacking in the implementation.

Yep purports to base its quality designation on criteria like how many votes a site receives, how many multimedia applications exist, how many

people visit the site in a 24-hour period, how many people come back during prime time hours, and how often people come back to the site overall. What about popularity? It is based on the average number of page views

that the site receives. How does Yep gets this information? It says only that the sites listed by Yep use a proprietary technology. The technology turns out to be a software suite (HitBox) developed by the parent company of Yep, WebSide Story. To my mind, this more than a tad limits the scope of sites that are monitored and tracked.

No wonder that Yep's "best" in quality and popularity include, in its education and reference category, term-paper mill sites with names like "Essays from the Shadow" and the "Essay Depot". These are running neck to neck, both in popularity and quality, with Indiana Hills Community College and Pennsauken Public Schools. In the News & Media category (or "zone" in Yep's parlance), there is a Pakistani hegemony with a Ukrainian newspaper, trying to break into the top ten under pressure from the 11th ranked site, a Pakistani one that happens also to be ranked as #1. It must be darned good to net both positions on the same list on the same day, with the same URL (<http://dawn.com>).

The top ranking business site was awarded to a site about trading with China. I could not judge it because I don't read Chinese, but I saw that it is practically in a tie position both in popularity and quality with the second-ranking Birthday Express site. Business persons must be particularly relieved to know about the existence of this latter site, but perhaps they should not yet delete their book

marks for the Dow Jones portal, Forbes, and Fortune. I almost made a bet that the best site in the Health and Fitness Zone would be a company selling snake oil. but I would have lost. I keep an eye on the ranking of real estate sites in case the Brooklyn Bridge comes up for sale. The design, by the way, is pretty; the gizmos and charts are attractive; but so are those time-share agents who want to sell you a condominium time slot in the swamps of Florida.

Communications to the author should be addressed to **Péter Jacsó**, 322 Aolaa Street, #703, Kailua, HI 96734; 808/956-5817; jacso@hawaii.edu.

Top 10 quality sites in News & Media		Quality ▾	Popularity ▾
1. DAWN - the Internet Edition, Pakistan	DAWN is Pakistan's largest circulated English language newspaper. Sub-Zone: Newspapers	★★★★★	★★★★★
2. Daily Jang Pakistan	Daily Jang is the most widely read Urdu language newspaper and web site with fastest and most reliable updates Sub-Zone: Newspapers	★★★★★	★★★★★
3. Radio Liberty	Radio Liberty Web Site Sub-Zone: News Media	★★★★★	★★★★★
4. Jang Group of Newspapers	Largest group of newspapers of Pakistan that provides most reliable and fastest news updates Sub-Zone: Newspapers	★★★★★	★★★★★

Yep considers these to be the top sites in the News & Media category ...

SEARCH Yep.com
The Top Search Engines At
Rank Sites by Quality and
Popularity

100% quality 100% popularity

News & Media

Refine your search by checking the boxes or go directly to a sub-zone by clicking on the link.

News Media Publications Magazines
 Radio and Television Newspapers Media

< Prev | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Next >

Top 100 quality sites		Quality ▾	Popularity ▾
11. DAWN - the Internet Edition, Pakistan	DAWN is Pakistan's largest circulated English language newspaper. Sub-Zone: Newspapers	★★★★★	★★★★★
12. jasarat.com	Newspaper of Pakistan in Urdu Language Sub-Zone: Newspapers	★★★★★	★★★★★

...and the Internet edition of the Pakistani newspaper is so good that it garners both the 1st and the 11th spot.