International Alcohol Information Database – Research

Helping to meet the needs of the evidence gap between the past and the future

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The International Alcohol Information Database – Research (IAID-Research), available at www.drinksresearch.org, is a new public bibliographic database, which aims to help fill a gap left after decisions were taken to no longer update the NIAAA’s ETOH and Rutgers Alcohol Information Database. It is freely available, and contains over 50,000 articles from approximately 3,550 peer-reviewed journals, including non-English language articles, going back to 2003. The database is the library catalogue of the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), a non-profit organization which receives its funding from major international producers of beverage alcohol. Subjects covered include consumption, alcohol-related health, road safety, education, prevention, treatment, economic, social, policy, and regulatory issues. Although the majority of articles deal with health-related issues, by including citations from related social, behavioral, marketing, regulatory, and economic journals it aims to provide a comprehensive and unique resource of peer-reviewed research. Still a work in progress, the database is updated weekly and includes links to journal articles and abstracts where available. It was designed to be user-friendly and freely available to the public and research community alike, and although no individual information about database users is collected or shared, a registration option allows regular users to save searches and bookmark articles citations. It is hoped that substance abuse information providers and researchers will not only use the database and find it helpful in their work, but that they will also highlight errors and omissions in the data, and make suggestions for improvements.

I very recently launched my library catalogue as a publicly available, free access website. This is a database of over 50,000 citations from peer-reviewed research journals, covering biomedical, social, behavioral, regulatory, economic and marketing areas related to alcohol from 2003.

Before I present the website and its features more fully, let me give you some background information about myself and my work. I work for the Centre for Information on Beverage Alcohol (CBA) and the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), which together form the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), a non-profit organization which receives its funding from major international producers of beverage alcohol. Subjects covered include consumption, alcohol-related health, road safety, education, prevention, treatment, economic, social, policy, and regulatory issues. Although the majority of articles deal with health-related issues, by including citations from related social, behavioral, marketing, regulatory, and economic journals it aims to provide a comprehensive and unique resource of peer-reviewed research. Still a work in progress, the database is updated weekly and includes links to journal articles and abstracts where available. It was designed to be user-friendly and freely available to the public and research community alike, and although no individual information about database users is collected or shared, a registration option allows regular users to save searches and bookmark articles citations. It is hoped that substance abuse information providers and researchers will not only use the database and find it helpful in their work, but that they will also highlight errors and omissions in the data, and make suggestions for improvements.

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on Beverage Alcohol (CBA), which was created in 1987 to provide private library information services to the major beverage alcohol producers. Although we receive our funding from the alcohol industry, I am first and foremost a librarian and information professional and the service I provide has to be comprehensive and objective, or I would not be doing my job.

In 2010 the CBA merged with the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP), and my manager, Marcus Grant, was in the 1980s the WHO Substance Use Divisional Head, made the keynote speech at the 1987 SALIS conference. It was a few years after that, in 1995, that he founded ICAP as an industry-funded non-profit alcohol policy think tank. When ICAP and CBA merged, he was delighted that I was a member of SALIS, and expressed his fond remembrance of the conference, his respect for SALIS’s mission and aims and his continued friendship with several SALIS members. He even found for me the 1987 conference proceedings book from the ICAP library and urged me to read it before I attended my first SALIS conference last year in Berkeley, which I duly did!

As many of you know, in 2003 ETOH (etho.niaaa.nih.gov), the alcohol database of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism or NIAAA, had its funding withdrawn and although the archived database is still available online, sadly it hasn’t been updated since. ETOH covered peer-reviewed alcohol-related research, books, reports, and grey literature from 1972 to 2003 and is still incredibly useful for older material.

The Center of Alcohol Studies at Rutgers also put their alcohol database online, with 80,000 citations from journals, books, conferences, reports, and dissertations, from 1987 to 2007. I’m sure our hosts and colleagues will be able to help with more information about this database, but again, it leaves a hole in the research literature coverage online.

The other main freely available resource online is, of course, Pubmed. There are other biomedical research websites available, but I have a limited budget too and for biomedical research, and cross-checking, this is what I
use. However, one of the arguments I used for getting my organization to fund the publication of my library catalogue was that although there are free websites available, such as Pubmed, they do not have the subject or journal coverage that I have, even within the addictions field, and the MeSH keywords are very broad – alcohol drinking, beverage type, and alcohol-attributable disease. A single focus website can have a much wider range of indexing terms and allow users to focus on particular areas for browsing, without having to know exactly what they’re looking for, or being daunted by the wealth of material out there. In addition, there are of course many fantastic resources out there on alcohol, drink driving, policy, prevention, treatment, etc and my website should be used in conjunction with these.

So, we come back to my website – www.drinksresearch.org. Unlike ETOH and the CAS database, this only covers peer-reviewed journal research, although there are plans to add a books and grey literature section. It currently has over 50,000 citations, from over 3,550 peer-reviewed journals, in 30 languages, and covers the period 2003 to the present. This is deliberate so that it acts as a potential natural successor to ETOH, which doesn’t contain citations after 2003.

A quick glance at the journal list will show that all the principle journals from biomedical, psychiatry, epidemiology, policy, economic, social and behavioral fields are covered. I am keen to improve the coverage and welcome being told of new titles or if I am missing a key journal please email me at bryony@cba-international.com

The citations mostly come from ISI Thomson Reuters Current Contents databases (Clinical Medicine, Life Sciences, and Social & Behavioral Sciences), and the aim is for the coverage to be as comprehensive as possible in the alcohol-related research area. Additional sources include Pubmed, table of content alerts, subscriptions, news releases, etc. I try and update the website at least weekly, if not daily, and it includes editorials, commentaries, and letters, in addition to research papers and reviews.

Having said that the focus of the database is on research articles from 2003 onwards it does have some key research articles from before then on it. However, I have consciously
tried to make the coverage as comprehensive as possible from 2003 onwards, so for pre-2003 use the ETOH and the CAS databases. My priority is to continue to keep it up to date, to improve the searching and reporting capabilities, and to widen the coverage, particularly for international research. As many of you know, journal coverage online from other regions and countries is patchy, and despite my lack of language skills, I aim to include key material with the help of Google translate.

The website is designed to be user friendly and is for a wide audience including, substance use librarians, researchers, public health workers, journalists, and members of the public. It is still in its early stages, and there are some refinements needed to improve the searching functions. In the future we are hoping to add Boolean search capabilities, as well as thesaurus indexing. The keyword thesaurus at present is like the journal list, and can only viewed as a reference tool – we hope to be able to make these terms hyperlink directly back into the search, and for the broader and narrower terms of thesaurus to function. Reporting functions also need to be improved upon.

The website is freely accessible and does not require user details or a registration so personal data is not retained. Users can choose to register and by doing this a user can save their popular, key searches and bookmark favourite articles, and this registration process can be done anonymously. There are, as we are aware, debates about using materials or resources from the alcohol but I am a librarian and my aim is to make resources available to all – but I realize that certain users may have concerns about openly endorsing or being seen to be using the database, so I deliberately made sure it could be used anonymously. The aim is for it to become more widely known and for interested people to use it and find it to be useful tool for their work.

Before I finish, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to SALIS for allowing me to present my website here, and also to thank those SALIS members who very kindly gave up their time to look at my website pre-launch, and who made many valuable suggestions on ways to improve it. It is still very much a work in progress, and I hope that you’ll look at it, play with it, and recommend it to your users, colleagues and contacts. If you have any suggestions or comments or queries about it, please feel free to e-mail me – bryony@cba-international.com

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