

Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists

The Value of the ETOH Database: A Position Paper

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Introduction. The NIAAA Alcohol and Alcohol Problems Science Database (ETOH) has been the major alcohol bibliographic resource for researchers, clinicians, and policy makers around the world since its Web debut in 1997. Even before that, librarians, especially those in the substance abuse field, used and depended on ETOH in all its pre-Internet forms since its creation more than thirty years ago. As committed users of and advocates for ETOH, SALIS Librarians have advised NIAAA on all aspects of the ETOH database for more than twenty-five years.

NIAAA has apparently made a decision to discontinue ETOH and retain it only as an archival resource, cutting off all updates as of December 2003. We say ‘apparently,’ because there has been no formal announcement of this decision, and as far as we know, no prior consultation with the alcohol research community. The NIAAA web site still lists the database but with no mention of discontinuation or change. In spite of the lack of public notice, since January 2 more than forty letters and e-mails (that we know of) have been sent to NIAAA from individuals and research organizations to protest the Institute’s action. We believe that NIAAA has an obligation to thoroughly assess the value of the ETOH database and supporting Thesaurus in consultation with the community of alcohol researchers and librarians before making any drastic decisions about its future. A survey of ETOH users should be part of this evaluation to determine what impact the loss of this resource would have on the work of science and the welfare of the public.

ETOH Strengths:

- **Multidisciplinary.** A major strength of ETOH is its multidisciplinary scope: ETOH collects and indexes literature from all disciplines relevant to the study of alcohol. No other single database has this multidisciplinary coverage. ETOH, and the AOD Thesaurus, index literature from clinical medicine and the biosciences, health services, education, epidemiology, psychology, sociology, criminal justice, history, economics, government, law and social policy.
- **Addiction Journals.** ETOH indexes and abstracts nearly fifty of the English language addiction journals, and eight foreign language addiction journals. [Appendix A] Coverage extends far beyond the specialty journals, however; articles from more than five thousand scholarly and clinical journals across all disciplines are included in ETOH.
- **Document Types.** ETOH covers more than just journal articles; it includes books, book chapters, government reports, conference papers and proceedings, think tank reports, and dissertations. These document types are particularly important in the social science and prevention areas.
- **Specificity.** Every ETOH record includes an abstract and is indexed using the NIAAA Alcohol and Other Drug Thesaurus. The Thesaurus is now in its third edition and is used

by academic, research, medical and public libraries around the world as an indexing, cataloguing and literature searching tool. These features allow far greater specificity in searching for alcohol-related topics than can be found in any other database.

- **World Wide Access.** ETOH is included as a link from at least 2,150 web sites around the world, where it is typically described as the authoritative resource for searching the alcohol science literature. As a free Internet resource, ETOH supports the world's scientific and clinical work on alcohol and alcohol problems, serving global public health and welfare by disseminating research findings to health care providers, researchers, policymakers, and the public.
- **Relationship with other Libraries.** The ETOH search software and the indexing language of the ATOD Thesaurus have been adopted by many of the substance abuse libraries in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Australia, in many cases expressly to complement ETOH. Due to its comprehensive coverage and sophisticated yet easy search capability, ETOH is a core component within this world-wide network of addiction libraries and information centers. [Appendix B]

ETOH vs. PubMed and other Academic Databases

- PubMed covers just 20 of the specialty addiction journals. PubMed does not cover many of the social science journals, nor would we expect it to, as its emphasis is on biomedical literature. PubMed indexes few books or book chapters, reports or government documents.
- PubMed does not index the *NIAAA Research Monograph* series and other state-of-the-art reviews such as *Research Advances in Alcohol and Drug Problems*, *International Handbook on Alcohol Dependence and Problems*, *ASAM's Principles of Addiction Medicine*, and other major compendia.
- PubMed's MESH (medical subject heading) terminology is a general biomedical indexing vocabulary, not designed specifically for alcohol literature; it is much more generic than the AOD Thesaurus. Searching and retrieval within ETOH using the language of the AOD Thesaurus, which was specially developed to represent the language of the alcohol field, leads to more relevant and specific results, with far fewer unrelated hits. Certainly PubMed, PsycInfo, and other databases include alcohol literature and can produce good results for many search topics, but too often users of those databases must comb through long lists of citations in order to find the desired, relevant literature. [Examples comparing the ability of ETOH and PubMed to retrieve alcohol topics are in Appendix C]
- While PubMed is available for free, most databases of scholarly and clinical literature are commercial, and are available only for a fee. [e.g. PsycInfo, Social Sciences Citation Index, Biosis, Excerpta Medica, Sciences Citation Index]. Even though many university-

based researchers and students can access these fee-based databases through campus licenses, training for each database may be needed to become proficient in order to search competently, which is a significant barrier to finding literature on many topics that cross languages, disciplines, and search engines. (For example the “Help” manual for PubMed is 40 pages long, compared to 8 pages for ETOH.) The indexing terminology is different across these various databases, which requires more time to prepare and conduct a thorough search. The wider public, which includes many treatment providers, has limited if any access to these commercial databases.

SALIS Recommendations.

SALIS urgently requests that NIAAA reverse its unilateral decision to cancel future development and support of the ETOH database and the AOD Thesaurus. We recommend that NIAAA continue to update, index, and abstract the alcohol literature in ETOH for at least one year, and during that time, undertake a thorough review and assessment of ETOH’s value in consultation with scientists, librarians, and other expert users. The review should also elicit possible cost-saving and other measures that could help ETOH remain a viable resource for many years to come.

Issues to consider in a review of ETOH’s viability and future might include:

- The possibility of a joint effort with NIDA for a combined Alcohol and Drug Problems Database, especially since much alcohol and drug research and literature address combined alcohol and drug topics.
- Reconsideration of NIAAA’s current practice of subscribing to costly biomedical journals that may include only a few relevant articles in a given year. It may be more cost-efficient for NIAAA to purchase individual articles, make use of the National Library of Medicine’s interlibrary loan services, or explore resource sharing with other addiction libraries.
- An assessment of the cost-effectiveness of maintaining ETOH as a comprehensive, premier database of the literature on alcohol studies, versus the costs resulting from passing the burden to individual users (including NIAAA grantees) who would have to search disparate, multiple databases (including some that are fee-based) to even come close to approximating the coverage of ETOH.

Summary. The cost of ETOH is relatively small in comparison with NIAAA’s total budget, but its value should not be underestimated. It is a unique and irreplaceable resource in the alcohol field, and exemplifies the premier status of NIAAA as a world center of alcohol research. ETOH ensures a solid knowledge base for policymaking, prevention and treatment planning, and dissemination of research results.

SALIS has been an organized professional association for over 25 years; for much of that time we have been users of and advocates for the ETOH database. We use it daily in our work; we train researchers, students and colleagues in how to use it. As librarians in this field, we are on front lines collecting and managing information for constituents. We share with NIAAA the mission of collaborating with other organizations and agencies engaged in alcohol and drug-related work, and also disseminating research findings to health care providers, researchers, policymakers, and the public. SALIS welcomes the chance to join NIAAA and other stakeholders in an honest discussion of the value and hoped-for future of the ETOH database. We respectfully ask that NIAAA reverse its recent unilateral decision regarding ETOH and the AOD Thesaurus, and instead begin discussion today in a spirit of collaboration.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of SALIS,

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Appendix A.

Addiction specialty periodicals indexed in ETOH

Journals

Addiction
Addiction Biology
Addiction Professional
Addiction Research and Theory
Addictive Behaviors: An International Journal
Addictive Disorders & Their Treatment
Alcohol: An International Biomedical Journal
Alcohol and Alcoholism: International Journal of the Medical Council on Alcohol
Alcohol Concern
Alcohol Research: A Selection from the Literature
Alcohol Research and Health
Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research
Alcoholism: Journal on Alcoholism and Related Addictions
Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly
American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse
American Journal on Addictions
Contemporary Drug Problems
Drug and Alcohol Dependence
Drug and Alcohol Review
Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy
Employee Assistance Quarterly
European Addiction Research
The Globe: An International Magazine on Alcohol and Drug Problems
Impaired Driving Update
International Journal of Drug Policy
Journal of Addictions Nursing
Journal of Addictive Diseases
Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education
Journal of Chemical Dependency Treatment
Journal of Child & Adolescent Substance Abuse
Journal of Drug Education
Journal of Drug Issues
Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse
Journal of Ministry in Addiction and Recovery

Journal of Psychoactive Drugs
Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions
Journal of Studies on Alcohol
Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment
Journal of Substance Use
Journal of Teaching in the Addictions
Nicotine and Tobacco Research
Prevention Researcher
Psychology of Addictive Behaviors
Research Communications in Alcohol and Substances of Abuse
Social History of Alcohol Review
Substance Abuse
Substance Use and Misuse
Tobacco Control

Foreign Language Journals:

Addictologia Hungarica
Adicciones
Alcologia
Alcoologie et Addictologie
*Blutalkohol
Nihon Arukoru Yakubutsu Yakkai Zasshi (Japanese Journal of Alcohol and Drug Dependence)
Nordisk Alkohol- & narkotikatidskrift (Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs)
Sucht: Zeitschrift Fur Wissenschaft Und Praxis

Note:

20 English language journals indexed by PubMed
1 foreign language journal indexed by PubMed

Appendix B

Addiction Libraries which have Adopted the Search Engine of the ETOH Database

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission
Alcohol and Drug Foundation (Australia)
Alcohol Research Group (California)
Canadian Center on Substance Abuse
Drug and Alcohol Services Council (Australia)
Drug Info Clearinghouse (Australia)
Drug Policy Alliance Library, (New York)
Drug Scope (U.K.)
Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems (California)
Massachusetts Prevention Centers
Michigan Resource Center
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (Australia)
New Zealand Alcoholic Liquor Advisory Council Library
NIAAA Research Library
Oregon Research Institute
Pacific Institute for Research & Evaluation
Prevention Information Center (Colorado)
Prevention Research Center (California)
Prevention Source BC (British Columbia)
Rutgers Center for Alcohol Studies Library (New Jersey)
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Resource Center (Florida)
Tobacco Education Clearinghouse of California
Tobacco Industry Tracking Database (California)
Univ. of Washington Alcohol and Drug Institute Library
Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Other Drugs
Wisconsin Clearinghouse

Appendix C

Comparison of MEDLINE and ETOH: Information Retrieval on Selected Topics

The following examples have been used to highlight the differences in coverage of ETOH versus MEDLINE, which has a biomedical focus. They also demonstrate examples of subject headings unique to ETOH, useful in finding sources to documents relevant to non- medical alcohol-related issues.

Note: Searching by Subject Headings (SH) (called MeSH in MEDLINE and Descriptors, from *The Alcohol and Other Drug Thesaurus*, in ETOH) is the preferred method of searching as subject headings are standardized terms that in many cases represent concepts difficult to adequately express in key words (KW).

Example 1

Underage Drinking, 2000 to Present

		# Records Retrieved
ETOH	Underage Drinking (SH)	206
MEDLINE	Underage Drinking (KW)	26
MEDLINE	Underage and Alcohol and Drinking (KW)	27
MEDLINE	Underage (KW) and Alcohol Drinking (SH)	34
MEDLINE	Adolescent (SH) and Alcohol Drinking (SH)	1233

Looking through the records retrieved from ETOH, it is evident that the scope of ETOH in terms of journal coverage includes more psychosocial journals and some of the addiction journals not indexed by Medline. It also includes a large number of government reports, as well as Dissertations, some edited books and conference reports. The last MEDLINE search strategy listed came up with many irrelevant records that did not capture the issue of underage drinking. This is a case of the value of a SH such as Underage Drinking in honing in on a specific issue.

Here are two citations that were retrieved through the ETOH search that were not included in the Medline results.

Fitzgerald, J.L.; Arndt, S. *Reference group influence on adolescent alcohol use*. Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education, 47(2): 42-56,2002.

Teen tipplers: America's underage drinking epidemic. New York, NY: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2002.

Example 2

Television and Advertising (Alcoholic Beverages), 1996 to Present

		# Records Retrieved
ETOH	Advertising (SH) and Television (SH)	58

MEDLINE Advertising (SH) and Television (SH) and 8
 (Alcohol Drinking (SH) or Alcoholic Beverages (exploded)(SH))

The ETOH results include reports from organizations such as the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth and ONDCP as well as social science journals such as *Journal of Advertising Research*, and *Contemporary Drug Problems*.

Example 3

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome / Effects (FAS/E)

Both PubMed and ETOH have a Subject Heading (SH) for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. However, finding information through searching PubMed on the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure on later development into youth and adulthood is challenging. Also, the effects have impact beyond the health system.

ETOH is indexed using SHs (subjectheadings) such as:
 Fetal Alcohol Syndrome; Fetal Alcohol Effects; Prenatal Alcohol Exposure.

PubMed has the specific SH, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. However, the other SHs available do not specifically relate to alcohol: Prenatal Exposure Delayed Effects or Maternal Exposure. As a result, one must also combine the former with SHs such as Alcohol Drinking and Alcoholism.

FAS/E in Corrections Population, 2000 to present

(Note: this is an emerging issue and not much was expected to come up.)

ETOH (Fetal Alcohol (SH) or Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (SH)) and 4
 (Offender (SH) or Inmate (SH))

MEDLINE Prisoners (SH) and 0
 (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (SH) or
 (Prenatal Exposure Delayed Effects (SH) and
 (Alcoholism (SH) or Alcohol Drinking)))

Of the 4 retrieved from ETOH, the key resource was an article from the journal **Forum on Corrections Research**.

Example 4

Undergraduate student drinking, 2000 to Present

		# records retrieved
ETOH	Undergraduate student (SH) and binge AOD use (SH)	142
	Undergraduate student (SH) and binge (SH)	143
	Undergraduate student (SH) and drinking (SH)	117
PubMed	College student (KW) and binge drinking (KW)	57
	Undergraduate student (KW) and alcohol drinking (SH)	62

Note: In PubMed there is no subject heading which would correspond with college student or undergraduate student; there is only the broader subject heading “Student”, which is why keywords were used.

The following are examples of citations from this search that are included in ETOH, but not in PubMed:

1. Kington, R. Under the influence: The binge drinking epidemic on college campuses. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, 2002. 3 p. (168354)
2. Executive summary: College students and "celebration drinking" East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, 2002. 17 p. (166819)
3. Binge drinking among underage persons. NHSDA Report, April 11, 2002. (168248)
4. Markowitz, S.; Chatterji, P.; Kaestner, R.; Dave, D. Substance use and suicidal behaviors among young adults. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2002. 31 p. (167608)
5. Heavy alcohol use among young adults. NHSDA Report, October 12, 2001. (163655)
6. Wechsler, H.; Wuethrich, B. Dying to drink: Confronting binge drinking on college campuses. Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2002. 322 p. (165434)

Example 5

Fraternity and Sorority drinking, no date limitation

	# records retrieved
ETOH Fraternity and sorority (SH) and binge (SH)	33
Fraternity and sorority (SH) and binge AOD use (SH)	33
Fraternity and sorority (SH) and drinking (SH)	28
PubMed Fraternity (KW) and sorority (KW) and drinking behavior (SH)	17
Fraternity (KW) and sorority (KW) and alcohol drinking (SH)	17
Fraternity (KW) and sorority (KW) and binge drinking (KW)	6

Note: In PubMed, there is no subject heading for fraternity or sorority, which is why keywords were used.

The following are examples of citations from this search that are included in ETOH, but not in PubMed:

1. Danielson, C.; Taylor, S.H.; Hartford, M. Examining the complex relationship between Greek life and alcohol: A literature review. NASPA Journal, 38(4):451-465, 2001. (162453)
2. Vicary, J.R.; Karshin, C.M. College alcohol abuse: A review of the problems, issues, and prevention approaches.

Journal of Primary Prevention, 22(3):299-331, 2002. (168712)

3.Ozegovic, J.J.; Bikos, L.H.; Szymanski, D.M. Trends and predictors of alcohol use among undergraduate female students. Journal of College Student Development, 42(5):447-455, 2001. (162450)

4.Riordan, B.G.; Dana, R.Q. Greek letter organizations and alcohol: Problems, policies, and programs. New Directions for Student Services, 81:49-59, 1998. (150702)

5.Haines, M.P. Social norms approach to preventing binge drinking at colleges and universities. Newton, MA: Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, 1996. 32 p. (148821)

6.Wechsler, H. Alcohol and the American college campus: A report from the Harvard School of Public Health. Change, 28(4):20-25, 60, 1996. (144556)

Example 6

Social Drinking , 2000-2003

		# Records Retrieved
ETOH	Social Drinking (SH)	96
PubMed	Social Drinking (KW)	1316

The PubMed search engine interprets the KW request, “Social drinking” by combining (1) the Subject Headings “Drinking” or “Alcohol drinking” or the word “drinking” in any text field with (2) the word “social” in any field.

Comparison of the Records Retrieved

Of the 96 items retrieved in ETOH, in this writer’s opinion 94 were highly relevant to the concept “Social drinking.” Of the 96 total items, however, only 50 were found in the PubMed Search. **Of the 46 items not found, 33 were in not in PubMed at all, while 13 were in PubMed but were not indexed closely enough to be retrieved in the “Social Drinking” search.** In many of these 13, the ETOH abstract pointed out the relevance of the study to social drinking, but this information was not available in the author/journal abstract used with the PubMed record.

Of the 1316 items retrieved in the PubMed searches, literally hundreds were “false drops,” totally irrelevant to the concept of social drinking.

Alternative PubMed Search

In view of PubMed’s poor retrieval performance with the keyword search, this writer looked for other PubMed subject headings that might be useful. The following searches were performed.

	# Records Retrieved
PubMed Social Behavior (SH) and Alcohol Drinking (SH)	146
PubMed Social Environment (SH) and Alcohol Drinking (SH)	103
PubMed Social Psychology (SH) and Alcohol Drinking (SH)	748

Of these 3 searches, a total of 771 records overlapped with “Social Drinking” (Kw) search, and 545 did not. Again, a substantial percentage of retrieval findings were not relevant. None of the 13 records that were in PubMed but not captured with the Social Drinking (kw) were captured here either.

Analysis: ETOH is indexed and abstracted specifically for the alcohol research and policy community; because PubMed is not, retrieval is not possible with the same precision and level of recall as in ETOH. Because PubMed has fewer subject headings for alcohol-related topics, the researcher must combine more terms and the, inevitably, sort through a large number of irrelevant hits.

Examples of the 33 citations found in ETOH And not in PubMed at all:

Executive summary: College students and "celebration drinking". East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, 2002. 17 p.

Adrover, M.; Nash, J.; et al. *Effects of abstinence from alcohol in social drinkers on GABA sub A benzodiazepine receptor (GBzR) sensitivity*. Journal of Psychopharmacology, 16(3):A56, 2002 abstract (31)

Ehnholm, C.; Jauhiainen, M. “Moderate alcohol consumption and high density lipoproteins” In: R. Paoletti, A.L. Klatsky, et al, Eds., *Moderate Alcohol Consumption and Cardiovascular Disease*, Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000. 134 p. (pp. 37-45, chapter 2.)

Graham, K.; Wells, S. *Aggression among young adults in the social context of the bar*. Addiction Research and Theory, 9(3):193-219, 2001

Hasking, P.A.; Oei, T.P.S. *Differential role of alcohol expectancies, drinking refusal self-efficacy and coping resources in predicting alcohol consumption in community and clinical samples*. Addiction Research and Theory, 10(5):465-494, 2002

Jansma, A.; Breteler, M.H.M. *Effect of context on responses to drinking cues in social drinkers and alcoholics*. Journal of Psychophysiology, 14(4):262, 2000

Kim, S.G.; Seo, K.O.; Park, J. M.; Kims, M.J. *Effects of naltrexone on subjective acute alcohol effects in social drinkers*. European Neuropsychopharmacology, 12(Suppl. 3):S395, 2002

Marsh, A.; Saunders, B. *Impaired control over drinking: Perceptions of social and treatment drinkers*. *Addiction Research*, 8(3):243-265, 2000

O'Dwyer, P. "Irish and substance abuse" In: S.L.A. Straussner, Ed., *Ethnocultural Factors in Substance Abuse Treatment*, New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2001. 447 p. (pp. 199-215, chapter 2)

Refaaii, M.A.; Nguyen, P.N.; et al *Liver and adipose tissue fatty acid ethyl esters obtained at autopsy are postmortem markers for premortem ethanol intake* . *Clinical Chemistry*, 48(1):77-83, 2002

Tran, G.Q.; Haaga, D.A.F. *Coping responses and alcohol outcome expectancies in alcohol abusing and nonabusing social phobics* . *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 26(1):1-17, 2002

Examples of Irrelevant Citations found in the PubMed Keyword Search

K Thevos, Fred et al. *Adoption of Safe Water Behaviors in Zambia: Comparing Educational and Motivational Approaches*. *Educ Health (Abingdon)*. 2000;13(3):366-376.

Connors P, Bednar C, Klammer S. *Cafeteria factors that influence milk-drinking behaviors of elementary school children: grounded theory approach*. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2001 Feb;33(1):31-6.

Bener A, et al. *Prevalence of Helicobacter pylori infection among low socio-economic workers*. *J Commun Dis*. 2002 Sep;34(3):179-84.

Dedecker AP, Goethals PL, De Pauw N. *Overview and quantification of the factors affecting the upstream and downstream movements of Gammarus pulex (Amphipoda)*. *Commun Agric Appl Biol Sci*. 2003;68(1):25-31.

Bolanos CA, et al. *Methylphenidate treatment during pre- and periadolescence alters behavioral responses to emotional stimuli at adulthood* *Biol Psychiatry*. 2003 Dec 15;54(12):1317-29.

Sabbagh W, Shafighian A, Harrison DH. *Upper labial deficiency in Mobius syndrome: a previously unreported feature and its correction*. *Plast Reconstr Surg*. 2003 Dec;112(7):1762-7.

Karsenty E, Sgan-Cohen H, Vered Y, Leventhal A. *[Optimal fluoride level in drinking water and public health]* *Harefuah*. 2003 Nov;142(11):754-8, 806.

Thompson MR, et al. *Chronic Fluoxetine Treatment Partly Attenuates the Long-Term Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms Induced by MDMA ('Ecstasy') in Rats*. *Neuropsychopharmacology*. 2003 Nov 12

