Late in 2003, SALIS members and others in the alcohol research community began to hear rumors that NIAAA had decided to stop funding its ETOH (Alcohol and Alcohol Problems Science) database, which has for almost thirty years been the premier alcohol database in the world.

As the rumors of ETOH’s demise continued to fly about, or sometimes burrow along underground, SALIS began to take some preliminary actions to try to assure that ETOH would not simply disappear without a debate to identify both its costs and benefits. Our concern was not eased by our realization that the Department of Justice DOJ’s ADAM (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring) program, another important resource on substance abuse, was already on life support.

(Continued on page 10)

“To praise ETOH, not to bury it”

By Clare Imholtz, Librarian, Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR), College Park, MD

Making Waves for Change — Conference Update

SALIS Home is in the final preparation stages for the 2004 SALIS 26th Annual Conference in Berkeley, California. An exciting program is planned featuring speakers including:

- Judy Appel, JD (Deputy Director - Legal Affairs, Drug Policy Alliance) - School Drug Testing
- Cynthia Hallett, MPH (Executive Director, Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights and & American Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation) - Tobacco Prevention: Policies, Research, and Tobacco Industry Interference
- Geoffrey Hunt (Senior Scientist, Institute for Scientific Analysis) - Dancing and Drugs: A Cross-National Perspective
- Craig Reinarmann (Professor of Sociology and Legal Studies - University of California, Santa Cruz; Visiting Scholar - Center for Drug Research, University of Amsterdam)- Librarians as Subversives: Truth is the First Casualty of Drug Wars, Too

The preliminary program can be viewed on the SALIS web site at http://www.salis.org/conference/2004program_agenda.html. We look forward to seeing you there.
This column of Web Sights examines web resources that track and/or compile policy measures related to illicit drug scheduling and sentencing. It is the third in a series of columns on policy issues related to alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. The resources discussed cover illicit drug policies and laws in many countries, as well as state-level policies in the United States. In the interest of space, this review focuses on specific resources that provide the status and/or comparison of policies. Web sites that provide analysis of the various policy approaches are not addressed specifically. However most of the web sites listed below include analysis of the issue along with links to related research-oriented, governmental, and advocacy web sites that will point you to further information on this topic.

UNITED STATES

In general, the United States has taken a punitive policy approach at the federal and state level to address problems associated with illicit drug use. In recent years, many groups have been formed to advocate for changes in the current drug policy in favor of a “harm reduction” approach. This has caused controversy as some believe this alternative approach is soft on drugs and a front for the legalization of drug use. Despite this controversy, many state legislatures are now considering these alternative approaches as they struggle with budget deficits. The 2004 State Health Care Priorities Survey Report from the Health Policy Tracking Service (http://www.hpts.org) of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reported that “substance abuse treatment in lieu of incarceration” (i.e., drug courts, diversion, and sentencing reform) may likely be a “priority issue” for 31 state legislatures in the 2004 session. Lawmakers are considering enacting diversion legislation or sentencing reform to curtail criminal justice costs. The web provides a range of resources to learn about the current policy in the U.S. and the changes being considered.

Getting Started

To get an overview of U.S. state policy on illicit drugs, check out ImpacTeen’s reference guide, Illicit Drug (Continued on page 4)

As I am sure many SALIS members recall, the Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs (VCATOD) http://www.atod.org was launched at the SALIS conference in Boston in 1995. Six organizations located in North America, Europe, Australia, and Africa agreed to work together on a pilot project to develop a worldwide “virtual clearinghouse” on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The project was endorsed by SALIS and ELISAD at their respective meetings in 1996, and in the spring of 2000 Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) made a three-year funding commitment to support the VCATOD.

Over the past nine years, the VCATOD partnership has grown from the original group of six organizations to over 65 partner organizations including multilateral organizations, national agencies, and NGOs. The service provided by the VCATOD is unique and not provided by any other web site or search engine. The Documents Database, the main feature of the VCATOD, provides one-stop access to “hard-to-find” policy and program practice documents (the fugitive literature) published on sites across the web. The VCATOD site is tri-lingual (Spanish, French and English) and there are approximately 6000 visitors each month.

Since inception the VCATOD has developed under a cooperative, distributed model. The initiating partners envisioned that partners would share the workload of building the Virtual Clearinghouse by promoting and contributing to the web site. The efforts and the critical mass of the partner organizations were seen as crucial to ensure its long-term sustainability. However, while the VCATOD is designed to be as self-sustaining as possible, ongoing monetary support is needed to support functions such as identifying and cataloguing documents, maintaining the web site, promotion, and project coordination.

In March 2003 the funding from DFAIT came to an end. Since then the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) has provided the financial support needed to maintain the VCATOD (a short-term arrangement which the CCSA is not prepared to continue over the long term). However the CCSA is prepared to review its commitment to the VCATOD if other partners are also willing to share (Continued on page 8)
Finding good non-fiction works for young children, say ages 5-8, is no easy task, for reasons obvious to anyone who actually knows a five year old. Most kids that young simply aren’t interested in reading about the hazards of smoking or alcohol, unless the books have magical creatures, dinosaurs, or princesses in them. However, if you are interested in non-fiction works for slightly older kids, there are a fair number of good books to be found - if you know where to look.

For starters, many of the resources discussed in my Fall 2003 SALIS News article on AOD children – fiction books are excellent places to go to find children’s non-fiction books as well. Those sources included: the public library, on-line bookstores such as Amazon.com, OCLC’s WorldCat and Horn Book (http://www.hbook.com), terrific resource, which specializes in publications and books for kids and young adults. However, a little digging on the Internet also revealed a number of other, smaller resources, many of which offered detailed bibliographies on this very topic.

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

The first is a resource I’m sure we’re all familiar with – the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI). NCADI’s publications page (http://store.health.org/catalog/) lets you limit your search by audience, providing “children” or “teens” to narrow down your query. From there, you’ll find a number of videos and books for kids and young adults. However, a little digging on the Internet also revealed a number of other, smaller resources, many of which offered detailed bibliographies on this very topic.

New from NIDA

Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse Volume I Highlights and Executive Summary, December 2003
NIH Pub. NO. 04-5364

This report provides an ongoing assessment of drug abuse in major metropolitan areas of the United States with the purpose of keeping both public and private sector policymakers and researchers informed with current and accurate data.

Periodical News

SUBSTANCE ABUSE, the official publication of AMERSA (Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse), has changed publishers from Kluwer Academic Publishers to Haworth Press, Inc., with vol. 25, 2004. Ordering information is on the web site (http://www.haworthpressinc.com/web/SUBA/), with an anticipated publication date of 6/24/04 for v.25(1).

You can now receive NIDA NOTES by e-mail. If you choose this option, NIDA will email you the full table of contents and links to every article and feature with each new issue of NIDA NOTES. You can receive the newsletter by both e-mail and traditional print delivery or choose the one option that works best for you.

Why choose e-mail delivery? NIDA NOTES will be available electronically roughly 2 weeks before the print version hits the streets -- giving you a jump on the latest news in drug abuse and addiction research. And with a couple of mouse clicks, you can send colleagues an article or an entire issue, including full-color graphics and links to abstracts or the full text of articles cited in references.

NIDA supports over 85 percent of the world’s research on drug abuse and addiction. Now, you can know the results and promise of that research even faster. For an electronic subscription, please visit the NIDA NOTES subscription page: http://nida.focusds.net

Contributions to this column are from Pam Miles, Nancy Sutherland, and NIDA
Policies: Selected Laws from the 50 States ([http://ww2.rwjf.org/news/special/drugLaws.jhtml](http://ww2.rwjf.org/news/special/drugLaws.jhtml)). It covers illicit drug laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including provisions for drug scheduling, penalty provisions for selected drugs, and medical marijuana. The data current as of January 1, 2000 was compiled as a basis for a research project to study policy measures. The guide includes a national overview for each issue, noting disparities between federal and state policy, and a snapshot of policies for each state.

The ImpacTeen reference guide represents a snapshot of state laws in time and unfortunately few resources exist that continually update the status of state policies. One exception is NORML’s State Guide to Marijuana Penalties ([http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=4916](http://www.norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=4916)). This guide outlines most penalties for marijuana possession, sale, paraphernalia, and other prohibited conduct in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and under federal law. The guide as a whole is reviewed and updated annually, but is also updated as laws are changed.


For Researchers

A specialized resource worth noting is for policy analysis. Refer researchers to the ImpacTeen Illicit Drug Legislative Database ([http://www.impacteen.org/idtdata_legislativedata.htm](http://www.impacteen.org/idtdata_legislativedata.htm)). ImpacTeen has built on the work in its reference guide and makes the data available to others. This resource provides data on statutory laws enacted in each state addressing three major issues: (1) controlled substances scheduling, (2) penalties for sale or possession of selected substances, and (3) medical marijuana provisions. The data made available in Excel format reflects laws in effect as of January 1, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Codebooks are available for each issue.

Drug Reform

As noted earlier, some jurisdictions in the U.S. have started to consider alternative approaches to the current policies. As noted in NCSL’s 2003 Mid-Year Substance Abuse Report ([http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/Ss3Sub Abuse.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/health/Ss3Sub Abuse.htm)), state legislatures have begun considering treatment of substance abuse in lieu of incarceration. This drug reform activity has also been tracked and compiled by organizations advocating for or against those changes.

The Drug Policy Alliance (the Alliance) web site is a comprehensive resource on harm reduction. Last fall, the Alliance released a report which details drug policy reforms that have taken place in recent years. The report, State of the States: Drug Policy Reforms, 1996-2002 ([http://states.drugpolicy.org](http://states.drugpolicy.org)), found more than 150 changes in state legislation on a range of issues in 46 states, including sentencing reform and medical marijuana initiatives. This report details reform measures in each state, but does not include specifics on the current status of laws in each state.

Despite federal opposition to the medicinal use of marijuana, some states have enacted legislation to protect marijuana patients and providers. In addition to the Alliance’s State of the States report, two reports are available that compare state medical marijuana laws:

- The Marijuana Policy Project report, State-By-State Medical Marijuana Laws: How to Remove the Threat of Arrest, ([http://www.mpp.org/statelaw/index2.html](http://www.mpp.org/statelaw/index2.html)) examines the differences between effective and ineffective state medical marijuana laws.

Some of the drug reform activity has been considered and implemented through state ballot initiatives. The National Families in Action has compiled information about this activity in A Guide to Drug-Related State Ballot Initiatives ([http://www.nationalfamilies.org/guide/index.html](http://www.nationalfamilies.org/guide/index.html)). This guide is currently historical in nature with information from 1996-2002. As new initiatives are certified for the ballot in 2004, they will be added to the site. The guide strives to be unbiased, providing information on “both sides.” In addition to a summary, outcome, and link to the full-text of each initiative, the guide includes arguments, sponsoring organizations, and financial contributors from both the opponents and proponents of each initiative.

(Continued on page 5)
Legislative Activity

Advocacy organizations maintain web resources to keep their constituents informed about impending legislative activity related to drug reform and other types of substance abuse policy. These resources are helpful to learn about legislation as it is being debated. Two resources are available to track drug policy legislation on a federal level:

- Join Together Online’s (JTO) Take Action section (http://www.jointogether.org/sa/action/) links users with advocacy resources. The Legislative Action Center monitors federal legislation related to substance use disorders and is updated weekly. For each bill, it lists the sponsors and cosponsors, status, and link to full-text. The legislation covered includes any legislation related to substance use disorders, including drug treatment policy.
- The Congressional Tool Kit (http://www.cadca.org/CoalitionResources/PP-main.asp) on the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) web site offers legislative advocacy resources to its members. The site includes a section on Current Legislation, covering a range of federal legislation related to substance use, including treatment and prevention. Short summaries and information on the bills progress are provided. In addition, the CADCA tool kit provides a weekly update of forthcoming Congressional hearings related to substance abuse.

Due to the level of effort involved in tracking legislation in 50 jurisdictions, most free web services do not track all types of legislative activity at the state level. NCSL’s Health Policy Tracking Service (http://www.hpts.org) is a comprehensive legislative tracking service that is available for a substantial fee. The following sites offer monitoring of state legislation on selected issues:

- Alliance’s State by State (http://www.drugpolicy.org/statebystate/) tracks selected state legislative activity the organization supports. For the states monitored, the Alliance links to state-specific news stories and reports, and state-based reform organizations.
- NORML tracks federal and state legislation related specifically to marijuana. One can see details on legislation (http://capwiz.com/norml2/issues/?style=D) or sign up for weekly e-mail alerts.

One can also use some of the available news services on the topic to stay current. Sign-up to receive news stories or read stories about drug policy issues at the following sites:

- Alternet’s DrugReporter (http://www.alternet.org/drugreporter/) provides news stories related to legislative and court issues on national and state level. The site is a project of the Independent Media Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to independent and alternative journalism.
- Drug Reform Coordination Network prepares a weekly e-mail newsletter, the Drug War Chronicle (http://stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle/324/index.shtml) on a range of issues related to drug reform.
- JTO Direct (http://www.jointogether.org/about/web/jtodirect/) includes daily news summaries about policy issues. Subscribers receive action alerts for legislation that is pertinent.
- The Media Awareness Project (http://www.mapinc.org) provides a comprehensive coverage of news stories related to drug policy and reform organized by topic.

GLOBAL RESOURCES

Across the world, countries have taken a range of policy approaches to address illicit drug use—from punitive to “harm reduction.” One can find international and country-specific policy information from a number of key resources. Most of these sites discussed below do not provide analysis of the laws, but rather list legislation. The Alliance’s Drug Policy Around the World (http://www.drugpolicy.org/global) provides a brief overview of each region’s policy and links from a drug reform perspective.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) web site (http://www.unodc.org) is a good place to start to learn about international policy. The site includes information about three UN Drug Conventions (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/un_treaties_and_resolutions.html). In addition, UNODC maintains an online Legal Library (http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/legislation.html) of the legislation adopted by States and territories around the world to put into effect the conventions. The library contains laws and regulations dating back to 1947 and is updated regularly with new laws as they are adopted. Many of the laws are available in English, but some are only available in country’s language. Also note UNODC’s Global Illicit Drugs Trends, http://www.unodc.org/unodc/global_illicit_drug_trends.html, a comprehensive source of estimates and statistics on the global drug problem.

The Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs (http://www.atod.org) provides policy

(Continued on page 6)
documents from its partner organizations. One can find a number of “National Strategies & Policies” in the Topic section (http://www.atod.org/english/menu.asp?section=topics&lang=en) or search the Document Database for policy papers. Most of the information on this site is provided in English, French, and Spanish.

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addiction (EMCDDA) (http://www.emcdda.eu.int) is a comprehensive resource on the state of drug use and response in the European Union. The EMCDDA maintains the European Legal Database on Drugs (ELDD) (http://eldd.emcdda.eu.int), an online database of information on European drugs-related legislation for the 15 Member States and Norway. The ELDD is a comprehensive site including:

- A searchable database of legislative text;
- Overviews on the status of policy for each country;
- Comparative reports on selective topics, including medicinal marijuana, controlled substance scheduling, and decriminalization measures; and
- News stories about policy developments.

Most of the information provided is in English, but the legislative text is in the language of the country of origin.

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) is an agency of the Organization of American States. CICAD’s web site (http://www.cicad.oas.org/) provides information on each of its members with links to key organizations and key documents, including national plans if available. Most plans are in language of country of origin.

IN CONCLUSION

Because they vary by jurisdiction, type of drug, offense, and overall approach, policy measures enacted to address the use, harm, sale, and production of illicit drugs are inherently complex. As a result the web resources which attempt to compile this information are limited. One needs to piece together information from a range of resources to get a full view. As was apparent in the first two Web Sights on policy measures (see: Volume 23(3), Fall 2003 and Volume 23(4), Winter 2004), most of these resources are maintained by advocacy organizations who track activity as a service to their constituents.

Editor’s Note: Special thanks to SALIS Member, Jenny Johnson at the Drug Policy Alliance for contributions to this issue.

(Continued on page 7)
the site, using a number of subject headings, including two relevant to us, “Juvenile NonFiction/Social Situations/Drugs, Alcohol, Substance Abuse” and “Juvenile NonFiction/Social Situations/Peer Pressure.” To see the matching materials, simply search for those subject headings on the home page. You can also search by author, title, or ISBN.

Some Suggestions

You have no time for all this searching, weeding, and reading? Then, here’s a list of some suggested series and titles, primarily taken from Horn Book’s on-line guide and the sources discussed above (with some information filled in by Amazon.com).

Series

1. The Drug Alert Series. Twenty First Century Books, 1991. Grades 4-6. This series offers a truthful, factual and comprehensive set of books about drugs for elementary school children. Titles include “Focus on Opiates” (S. Destefano), “Focus on Medicines” (S. Destefano), “Focus on Nicotine and Caffeine” (R. Perry), “Focus on Alcohol” (C.O. Grace), “Focus on Marijuana” (S. Destefano), and “Focus on Cocaine and Crack” (J. Shulman). Though written by different authors, the books all share a similar friendly, yet serious tone, offering the basic facts about a variety of substances. Analogies are in the realm of children’s experience, but the author’s do not try to fool readers – for example, they are told that “caffeine is not as harmful to the body as other drugs” but “no amount of cocaine is safe.” Peer pressure is explained, and techniques on ways to “just say no” are offered. The books are attractively decorated with simple, childlike line drawings in bright primary colors. Though this series is actually out of print now, multiple used copies are available on Amazon.com.

2. The Junior Drug Awareness Series. Chelsea House Publishers, 1999. Grades 4-6. This series offers several informative books, each focusing on a different drug, with a clear, strong “just say no” approach. It provides helpful information and up-to-date facts and would be a great resource for a student writing a report for class. The books have color photographs and charts and also include appendices of resources and web sites kids can use to gather more information. There are fifteen titles in the series, including: “Steroids” (D. Balcavage), “Alcohol” (N. Peacock), “Nicotine and Cigarettes” (G. De Angelis), “Marijuana” (J.L. Hasday), “Heroin” (J. Gallagher), “LSD, PCP, and Other Hallucinogens” (J.E. Phillips), and “How to Say No” (V. Aronson). Each book begins with an introduction by Barry McCaffrey, former director of the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Individual Titles

1. Black C. My Dad Loves Me, My Dad Has a Disease : A Child’s View : Living With Addiction. MAC Publishers, 1997. ISBN: 0-910223-23-8. Ages 5-12. This is an excellent book for young children who have one or two addicted parents. The pictures were all drawn and the stories all written by children ages five to fourteen, and some of the many points covered include the concept of addiction as a disease, the personality changes that come with addiction, blackouts, relapses, and recovery.


3. Hastings JM ; Typpo MH. Elephant in the Living Room : The Children’s Book. Hazelden Information Education, 1994. ISBN: 1-568380-35-6. This title is a valuable tool for families dealing with addiction issues. It assists a parent or other family member in opening the lines of communication about virtually any tough topic. The children’s book gives the child an item to take ownership in. Meanwhile, obtaining the leader’s guide will assist adults in understanding the developmental stages and reactions that the child is experiencing.

4. Haughton E. Drinking, Smoking, and Other Drugs. Raintree, 2000. ISBN: 0-7398-1345-5. Grades 4-6. Legal, illegal, and medicinal drugs are defined in this short book, and then two common drugs, alcohol and nicotine, are discussed in greater detail. This is an attractive book with color photos, boxed facts, and sound-bite headings like “Paying the Price.”

5. Herscovitch, A. Everything You Need to Know About Drug Abuse (revised edition). Rosen Publishing Group, 2000. ISBN: 0-823930-36-X. Grades 5-8. The number of teen drug users has risen steadily throughout the 1990s. This ever-growing threat puts our teens at risk. This book uses clear, concise language to describe the grim reality of drug abuse and offers suggestions of where kids can turn to escape from it.

(Continued on page 8)
6. Hyde, MO. Know About Smoking. Walker & Co, 1995. ISBN: 0-802783-99-6. Ages 9-12. This title has been rewritten and expanded to reflect new findings and more serious attitudes about smoking. The author discusses the history of nicotine and tobacco, effects on the body, public perceptions, and prevention, paying particular attention to advertising. The book features numerous black-and-white anti-smoking posters as well as photographs and is written in a clear, engaging style.


8. Lombardo, M. The OrganWise Guys: A No Smoking Policy! Wellness Inc, 2002. Ages 9-12. ISBN: 1-931212-09-0. This book, one of a series designed to educate kids about a variety of health issues and basic anatomy, teaches children about the effects of second-hand smoking. It uses a story about two friends, Windy and Anna. Anna’s grandmother lives with her and is a smoker. When Windy hears Anna coughing at school one day, she visits Anna’s house and realizes what the cause is. She teaches Anna and her mother about the negative effects of second-hand smoking, which leads her mother to start a “no smoking” policy in their house.


The 2004 SALIS Conference in Berkeley is quickly approaching. In addition to all the wonderful presentations and speakers, we will be wrapping up the election of the 2004 Board members. Our membership may not be as flamboyant as the candidates in the recent California Gubernatorial race, but I believe we are just as strong as Governor Schwarzenegger! Keep an eye out for those ballots, and return them to SALIS Home as soon as possible. With that, I present the Nominees for the 2004 SALIS Executive Board:

Chair-elect: Eric Helmuth, JoinTogether

Secretary: Clare Imholtz, CESAR

Member-at-Large: Liz Foster, NCADI
Jennifer Goodair, DrugScope
Sheila Lacroix, CAMH
David Man, CASA
Virginia Sanchez, graduate student

Congratulations to the following SALIS members for winning a scholarship to the SALIS Conference:

- Christine Goodair, DrugScope, UK
- Mimi McKay, Texas Commission on Alcohol & Drug Abuse
- Liz Wilhelm, Washington State Alcohol/Drug Clearinghouse

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**SALIS Board Elections**

*By Virginia Sanchez, Past-Chair and Nominations Committee Chair, Graduate Student, School of Information Resources and Library Science, University of Arizona*

The 2004 SALIS Conference in Berkeley is quickly approaching. In addition to all the wonderful presentations and speakers, we will be wrapping up the election of the 2004 Board members. Our membership may not be as flamboyant as the candidates in the recent California Gubernatorial race, but I believe we are just as strong as Governor Schwarzenegger! Keep an eye out for those ballots, and return them to SALIS Home as soon as possible. With that, I present the Nominees for the 2004 SALIS Executive Board:

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“`The person who doesn’t read has no advantage over the person who can’t read.”`

(paraphrased) Mark Twain
New Books
Compiled by Andrea L. Mitchell, Librarian
Alcohol Research Group, Berkeley, CA


(Continued on page 10)


SALIS contacted NIAAA Center Directors and other important figures in alcohol research such as Robin Room. Several leading researchers and many SALIS members volunteered to write to NIAAA Director, Dr. Ting-Kai Li, about the potential costs of losing ETOH. We also learned that NIAAA had commissioned an evaluation of ETOH by Aspen Systems, and were promised a copy of that evaluation. A core team of concerned SALIS members was formed to write a position paper on the value of ETOH and develop supporting appendices, including sample comparison searches on ETOH and PubMed. This document is available at [http://salis.org](http://salis.org).

Having learned that the next NIAAA Advisory Board meeting would be held on February 5th, the SALIS Board decided that Executive Director, Andrea Mitchell, should officially represent SALIS in its capacity as an NIAAA Liaison Organization, and voice our concerns. Samantha Helfert and I were able to accompany Andrea to the afternoon session of the Board meeting, which opened with a presentation by Richard Yoast of the American Medical Association, concerning the joint NIAAA-AMA alcohol abuse prevention program, “A Call to Action.” Dr. Yoast included a statement of support for ETOH, highlighting its importance for policy research; he also noted that APIS, the recently initiated Alcohol Policy Information System, was experiencing funding cutbacks.

Following Dr. Yoast, Andrea provided all Board members with a copy of the SALIS position paper and letters to NIAAA supporting ETOH, and made a short presentation summarizing these materials. Andrea began her presentation by saying that she came “To praise ETOH, not to bury it.” She gave a short description of ETOH including its multidisciplinary scope, coverage, size, and document types.

She noted that ETOH is linked from at least 2,150 web sites around the world, and asked NIAAA to consider putting a counter on the database so that a daily or weekly usage statistic would be known.

Mentioning the AOD Thesaurus, she reminded the Board that this too was a tool funded by NIAAA, to provide a language structure for cataloguing and searching the AOD literature. It is the language specificity which makes searching output so much more relevant than searching results from more broadly disciplined databases, such as PubMed.

The SALIS recommendations made up the second half of her remarks. These recommendations from the position (Continued on page 11)
paper include:

— NIAAA consider a joint effort with NIDA for a combined Alcohol and Drug Problems Database.

— NIAAA reconsider their current practice of subscribing to costly biomedical journals that may include only a few alcohol articles in a given year. It may be more cost-efficient to purchase individual articles, make use of the National Library of Medicine’s interlibrary loan services, or explore resource sharing with other addiction libraries.

— NIAAA undertake 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.

To summarize she said that 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.”

In closing, she emphasized that SALIS, in a spirit of collaboration, would like to join NIAAA in an honest discussion of the value of ETOH and that it was hoped that NIAAA would reverse its decision regarding the database and the AOD Thesaurus, until an assessment was made.

When she had finished, Dr. Li responded, “ETOH is not dead…ETOH is alive, but it is not well.” Dr. Li said that he had not wished to address the ETOH issue in this Board meeting, but since the topic was now under discussion, he expressed his concerns about the costs of ETOH and possible duplication of PubMed. He also commented that NIAAA was the only NIH Institute to still have its own database.

Dr. Li then turned the floor over to NIAAA’s Deputy Director, Dr. Faye Calhoun, who gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on the “ETOH Transition Project.” Dr Calhoun emphasized that it was difficult, in today’s changing information landscape, to keep ETOH up to date and comprehensive. Since ETOH’s inception the alcohol research and information technology fields have changed, she noted, making information more readily accessible: 1) users have increased access to NLM databases; 2) there is increased access to the other databases, such as CRISP; 3) NIAAA has a web site; 4) more alcohol research articles are published in mainstream journals; and 5) the number and breadth of these articles is increasing. These factors along with budget constraints have forced NIAAA to reconsider ETOH’s role.

The goals of the Transition Project are to replace ETOH by (1) having PubMed include additional journals and provide other research articles online, (2) providing resource links on the NIAAA home page; (3) developing a strategy for covering books and book chapters, asking NLM to include seminal texts in PubMed; and (4) archiving ETOH.

According to the Aspen evaluation, the addition of only four (unidentified) journals to PubMed would enable PubMed to come reasonably close to the breadth of coverage currently available only via ETOH. However, Andrea pointed out that the journal counts provided by Aspen were highly suspect—in fact must have been provided by someone not very familiar with the alcohol literature.

Dr. Calhoun also read two short excerpts from the more than 40 letters about ETOH that NIAAA had received. The excerpts made it seem that researchers were supporting the NIAAA decision. Andrea responded by quoting some of the more typical statements in the researchers’ letters and named a few of the organizations and researchers who had sent them.

Several of the Board members then commented, and I will try to paraphrase here, as follows: the decision seems a bit premature, can we consider at a future meeting?; the issue seems to be ill-researched, and ill-represented for thorough discussion; we need a better sense of the costs involved; wouldn’t some fields of research, such as the social sciences, be impacted more than others?; can fugitive literature be covered in PubMed, as it is in ETOH?

Dr. Li concluded this session of the Board meeting by again noting fiscal constraints, and by suggesting the possibility of collaboration, perhaps with NIDA or SAMHSA.

As of this date (3/17/04), SALIS has not yet received the evaluation which was promised more than a month ago. In addition, while ETOH now lies dormant with no new records being added, plans for future discussion or evaluation have not been forthcoming. We remain very concerned about the potential defunding of ETOH, and we are absolutely convinced that ETOH can continue to make a unique, irreplaceable, and cost-efficient contribution to alcohol research and the public good.
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