

Research Database Tips

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More Reference Gems from Our Databases

Our last database tip talked about *Credo Reference*, a one stop source for information from 516 different reference books. However, it isn't the only source of reference information in our database collection. This tip will cover four more databases of great reference value.

Encyclopedia Britannica Online – The online version of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* is updated constantly and contains numerous features not available in the print version. You will find an information bar to the left of each article providing access to related media (videos, images, animations), related articles within the encyclopedia, additional content (usually current magazine and newspaper articles), and websites selected for their authenticity by *Encyclopedia Britannica* staff.

This is an excellent source for anyone needing solid background information about a subject and could be a good transition into using databases for those students who can't get beyond their dependence on *Wikipedia*.

Access Science – This is the online version of what used to be called *The McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*. In addition to the generally recognized natural and physical sciences, it includes articles on agriculture and soil science, computers and information technology, food science and technology, mathematics, and psychiatry and psychology. *Access Science* also includes over 2000 biographies of well known scientists and a large number of very useful animations, videos and images. Articles are continuously updated and research updates are added as needed. It also highlights important new scientific discoveries under its News tab every week.

OED Online – If you have degrees in English or history, the *OED* is probably an old friend.

The Oxford English Dictionary: the Definitive Record of the English Language is the largest and most respected dictionary of the English language. Its aim is to document the history of the English language from the earliest records (ca, AD740) to the present day. Unlike most general reference dictionaries, the *OED* lists the oldest usage of a word first and the newest last. It gives the pronunciation of the word first; then its etymology or origin. The *OED* then lists all the meanings of a word. Each meaning is followed by dated examples of the word used in context taken from books or periodicals of the time period. It includes period slang and rude or profane language not easily located anywhere else.

The *OED* is the place to go if you need help deciphering the meaning of words in historical documents, Chaucer, Shakespeare, etc. It is constantly being updated to include newly recognized words and their derivations and meanings.

Culturegrams Online – This database provides information on life in over 200 countries of the world, each state in the United States and all 13 Canadian provinces and territories. It is divided into four parts.

The World Edition presents updated information on the daily life and customs in countries around the world. It includes photos, videos, slideshows, interviews, information on famous people, and recipes. A printable map, picture of the flag, an audio clip of the national anthem, and a standard data table are also included for each country. The Kids Edition simplifies the information given in the World Edition and places it into a more

child friendly format. The States Edition and the Provinces Edition are set up like the Kids Edition and provide the same type of information broken down by individual state and province.

Culturegrams Online was originally published for business travelers. The section on customs and courtesies for each country covers personal and business etiquette necessary to make a good impression. Nursing students may find the brief description of health care for each country useful. In addition statistics are provided for infant mortality, life expectancy, number of doctors, maternal mortality etc. The World Edition has a link to comparative data tables at the top of each article that allow country by country comparison on these and other data sets. Students taking a foreign language will find *Culturegrams Online* a great source for cultural reports on life in non-English speaking countries. Keep this database in mind if you have a child in the public school system. There will always be those “last minute” assignments on countries, states, and provinces that drive parents crazy.