

contents

Introduction	v
<i>Francine Fialkoff</i>	
How to Use This Guide	vii
The Evaluators	ix
E-Reference Resources by Subject Area	1
Arts	3
Biography	9
Business/Economics	15
Current Events	21
Genealogy	27
General Reference	31
Health & Medicine	35
History	41
Information Technology	51
Language/Linguistics	55
Literature	59
Philosophy & Religion	65
Popular Culture	71
Science	77
Social Sciences	83
Travel & Tourism	91

Directory of Publishers97

Title Index..... 121

Producer Index 125

4-Star E-Resource Index..... 127

Subject Index 129

About the Editor..... 133

introduction

When we launched “E-Reference Ratings” in *Library Journal*, we had no idea how it would resonate with our readers and take on a life of its own. Now 16 categories strong, this quick-reference guide includes just shy of 200 databases, with snap, but not snappily made, assessments written by your colleagues from libraries around the country. The subjects covered address the databases librarians have told us they need the most, in areas from current events to health and medicine, from genealogy to business, from popular culture to history, from science and language and literature to philosophy and religion.

The endeavor is the brainchild of *LJ* reference editor Mirela Roncevic, whose imprint you’ll see all over it. Roncevic assembled what she calls a “dream team” of contributors (see “The Evaluators”). Under her leadership, with lots of back and forth, and with guidance from *LJ*’s E-reviewer extraordinaire, Cheryl LaGuardia (Widener Library, Harvard University), the team decided on the databases to include and the criteria by which to judge them. Again, they went back to the source: librarians themselves. Beyond price, what are librarians looking for when they consider which database to buy? How do you characterize that oh-so-vague term *value*? There were no easy answers for our contributors.

You’ll notice that many of the databases fare poorly on linking, which we describe as “cross-searchability with other files [databases]; ability to integrate with and link to other products.” Despite the existence of both library and publisher linking projects, and the ubiquity of open URLs, linking has

only recently emerged from adolescence. We expect to see improvement over time. As for pricing, you'll notice we don't give specifics. That's still a morass, with various pricing considerations in play, from concurrent users to FTEs to perpetual access, and more. Many publishers/vendors still don't want to give us the facts, so value takes into consideration factors other than just cost, incorporating all the criteria.

What's a quick reference guide without an at-a-glance overview? Roncevic came up with our star rating system. In each category, and for each criterion, she pressed her contributors to nail down their assessments with one, two, three, or four stars. The annotations themselves contain kernels that go beyond the stars, touching on strengths and weaknesses, giving clues to audience, and leading you to standards in their field and new kids on the block.

There's more to come from *The Library Journal Guide to E-Reference Resources*, with additional categories and updates of existing ones on the horizon. We'd love to hear from you. Tell us what areas still need assessment and what other improvements you'd like to see. Meanwhile, welcome to the *Guide*.

Francine Fialkoff
Editor-in-Chief
Library Journal

how to use this guide

This guide provides a tool to help librarians sort through the maze of subject-specific electronic resources now available. Brief but comprehensive overviews of nearly 200 subscription-based e-resources as well as quick-reference criteria rating charts help inform decisions about what databases to purchase to build your e-resources collection.

Included in the guide are some of the best-known and respected e-resources currently available, divided into 16 key subject categories and assessed according to the criteria that librarians use most when considering what to buy. Although neither the listings nor the criteria can possibly cover everything, this tool is a valuable starting point in the complex process of deciding what resources are right for you.

For each product, you'll find a description and then star ratings for all of the criteria. The description is intended to relate the scope and context of the product, while the ratings should provide a sense of its strengths and weaknesses. Be sure to read both the "criteria" legend, which explains what questions the evaluators asked themselves when perusing each product, and the "ratings" legend, to see what the various stars mean.

Criteria

SCOPE	range and breadth of content
WRITING	quality of the writing; consideration of the audience
DESIGN	visual appeal; strengths and weaknesses of the interface
BELLS & WHISTLES	inclusion of multimedia files, interactive maps, blogs, and other features
EASE OF USE	logic behind the organization; efficiency of the search mechanisms
LINKING	cross-searchability with other files; ability to integrate with and link to other products

Ratings

(for the first six criteria, see separate explanation for “value”)

*	poor/insufficient
**	satisfactory/sufficient
***	good/plentiful
****	excellent/comprehensive

Value

Value is a relative term, taking into consideration not only cost but myriad related factors. If a product is expensive, does its comprehensiveness and quality warrant the high cost? Are too much time and energy required to find material, given the price? Is it a narrowly defined, inexpensive product that may receive heavy use in a small public library?