APA Databases and the Quality Continuum

Throughout the year, librarians contact APA with questions related to APA databases. Inquiries may pertain to full text linking, missing issues, or data errors. The Customer Relations staff teams up with their colleagues at PsycINFO to research each instance. Careful detective work may uncover issues that can be easily resolved thanks to sophisticated production systems and collaborative partnerships with our vendor partners. Because the data are so interrelated, it is often difficult to discern whether the question is one for a platform or third-party vendor—or APA. We hope that this article, focusing on data quality and the vendor collaboration process, will provide helpful insights into the quality process at APA and provide valuable information on how we partner with vendors to deliver the APA databases.

With nearly 200,000 new records added annually, database quality control for PsycINFO is a full-time effort at APA. From the time a journal or book arrives in the acquisitions department until it is released to the public on multiple vendor platforms, and beyond, PsycINFO staff continuously monitor the process to assure the quality of the information presented in the PsycINFO family of databases.

The quality process starts with journal selection, where content is evaluated to meet APA’s stringent coverage standards. An evaluation team meets monthly to review candidate journals. The team, comprising key managers across the department, confers to determine whether content complements the multidisciplinary coverage of PsycINFO. Content, article format, and references are reviewed to ensure that they meet the selection guidelines.

Targeted search results depend on data quality in the record and consistency during the indexing process. Because of this, a representative from the Bibliographic Production group participates in the journal selection process to determine whether APA has the relevant vocabulary for indexing purposes. Once the journal is selected, a parent record is input into the production system. The initial record becomes the foundation of all related records for the lifespan of the journal.

**Continuous Quality Assurance**

At every stage of the life of a PsycINFO record, quality checks and additional system validations are performed. During the cycle, staff review the
information being created in the record against the source document to verify accuracy of journal and book titles, publisher and ISSN or ISBN information, volume and issue numbers, and publication dates. Internal processes are built in to help prevent inconsistencies in these data, duplicated coverage of the same materials, and other errors from occurring.

In Bibliographic Production, Technical Information Analysts (TIAs) input the bibliographic citation data, input or create abstracts, and do the classification and indexing. All of these fields are either spell checked or otherwise validated by various system checks. Also, TIAs watch for misspellings in this information that are created by optical character recognition (OCR) errors, which often occur when information is copied from a poor-quality PDF. Indexing consistency is maintained because terms are assigned from the controlled vocabulary in the APA Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms, 11th edition.

Drop-down menus of classification codes and listings for document types, methodologies, and population information also help to prevent errors.

The final stage in the record creation process is quality review. While there are validation procedures and spell checks, quality review is also the point at which TIAs check the more subjective aspects of quality. So, in addition to verifying the accuracy of the information against the source document, examining the content of the record—especially the indexing—is an important part of quality review.

Following quality review, a final programmatic check of the records ready to be released in the databases is run weekly. This identifies certain types of errors which are quickly corrected before the records go into the release process.

During quality review, written feedback helps staff improve their bibliographic production and index-
ing skills. Manuals and quality assurance tips are constantly being updated and revised so that there are clear guidelines for how to handle the variety of literature that we see. Continuing education opportunities are offered so that staff are always learning and expanding their skills and knowledge.

What happens when, despite our best efforts, errors make their way into a released record? Users, both external and internal, report these errors to the Customer Relations Team. Matthew Maddox, the Quality Assurance Coordinator, researches the errors to determine how they occurred and how best to fix them. If it is an internal error, these corrections are made weekly and posted to the APA PsycNET databases. Corrections are delivered to the different vendors, who may post them based on their own schedules. To report an error, provide the journal title, volume, issue, and publication year, and description of the problem to psycinfo@apa.org.

Working with Vendor Partners: PsycINFO’s Product Development Team

Internal review processes are just one way APA ensures the quality of its database products. Perhaps more visible to users is APA’s Product Development Team in PsycINFO. This team collaborates with vendors to ensure the functionality, quality, and appearance of the PsycINFO databases on all of the platforms: DataStar, Dialog, DIMDI, EBSCOhost, Elsevier Science/Science Direct, Hogrefe Publishing Group, OCLC, OvidSP and ProQuest/CSA Illumina.

The team coordinates the metadata records, posts XML files to a file transfer protocol (FTP) site, and notifies the vendor partners. The Technical Specifications Analyst, Mary Ann Hantakas, develops technical specifications for the PsycINFO databases for the third-party vendor systems which the vendors use to upload, format, search, and display the databases once the files have been picked up at the FTP site.

The Vendor Relations Specialist, Carl Cabading, works closely with all of the vendors to ensure that updates and corrections to PsycINFO databases are delivered and uploaded. An important part of Carl’s job is to work alongside the vendor product management contacts to respond to user feedback about database content and quality. In addition, he is the liaison between APA’s technical staff and the link resolver companies to ensure that the data syntax in PsycINFO enables linking to full text databases like PsycARTICLES. The Product Development Team also serves as vendor platform resources and consultants for staff in other PsycINFO departments.

The annual reload of APA databases is a key part of continuously improving the quality of PsycINFO and the full-text databases and streamlining searching. Reloads involve upgrades that include new data fields, expanded field values, new Thesaurus terms, and other enhancements or large-scale global corrections. Because the metadata from PsycINFO are used for PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, and PsycCRITIQUES, a change in the PsycINFO record structure affects these databases. The Product Development Team provides technical specifications to the vendors about display, formatting, and search functionality. After the vendors reload the databases, team members test and evaluate reload data and provide feedback to the vendors to ensure that the new enhancements are fully accessible to users.

To familiarize subject specialists with new database features, the PsycINFO Customer Relations Team provides extensive training during conferences and via webcast.

At every stage of the record production process, from acquisition and accessioning to transfer and release, PsycINFO staff and our programmatic tools are working to assure the quality of the data captured in our records and released to the public. Communication and collaboration with vendors and customers is one of the other ways that PsycINFO databases are effectively delivered and continuously enhanced.
PsycEXTRA Highlights Emerging Research

In recent years, scholars have turned to “gray literature” to identify the emerging research in the behavioral sciences. Many research databases, including ACS, ERIC and PsycEXTRA, make this authoritative source of scholarship available prior to publication in the peer-reviewed literature. PsycEXTRA, the gray literature database published by the American Psychological Association, makes this source of hard-to-find information available in a database format, indexed with the *Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms, 11th edition*. Working papers, field studies, technical reports, newsletters, pre-publications, and conference proceedings fall under the auspices of “gray literature.”

Social Issues

Recently, APA has included publications from the U.S. Army and Department of Defense on battlemind training. The army defines battlemind as the mindset that helps soldiers survive in the war zone and face extremely adverse conditions. The state-of-mind does not help the returning veteran adjust well to civilian life, so the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) initially developed Battlemind Transition Training for soldiers to prepare for deployments and to transition their combat skills for a smoother reintegration at home. PsycEXTRA began including this literature in Spring 2007, as soon as it was publicly available. However, to date, little has been written about battlemind in the scholarly literature.

PsycEXTRA also contains materials on other timely topics. For example, school violence and cyberbullying are frequently in the news. PsycEXTRA holds a variety of materials on these topics, including annual reports of school safety, fact sheets and pamphlets for students, parents, and teachers on violence prevention, a directory of state violence prevention resources, news and magazine articles, and abstracts of school violence research. While many of these materials may be available on the open web, APA applies indexing from the *Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms*, and all of these items and more can quickly be found in PsycEXTRA by simply searching the index term “school violence” or the natural language term “cyberbullying.”

Emerging Health Issues

Other emerging health and mental health topics include the relationship between antidepressants and suicide in teenagers, obesity, and autism. The efficacy of antidepressant medications for children and teens has recently been questioned amid claims that these medications may actually increase suicidal tendencies in this population. PsycEXTRA covers newsletters, articles, press releases, and research on this topic and includes fact sheets for parents and caregivers of teens being treated for depression as well as information on FDA-labeling of these drugs.

An estimated 64% of Americans and nearly 16% of children are now considered obese. PsycEXTRA contains research on obesity prevention, efficacy of intervention programs, and the impact of obesity on body image and self esteem. State health resources, news and magazine articles, and more are included.

An increasing number of children are being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. PsycEXTRA contains longitudinal studies of autism treatment, coping behaviors of autistic children, materials on the debate of vaccines causing autism, international newsletters, reports and other documents on autism research.

Contributions

Contributions to PsycEXTRA come from recognized content owners such as the Brain Tumor Foundation, California Department of Mental Health, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, RAND Corp, Western Psychological Association, Consortium for Policy Research in Education, American Psychological Association, Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Society for Chaos Theory in Psychology and Life Sciences, United Kingdom Department of Health, Rocky Mountain Psychological Association, and others. The demand for this information will increase over time as scholars use this literature as part of the primary research process.

In addition, PsycEXTRA has recently made available 3,000 conference full-text abstracts from the 2007 APA Conference in San Francisco, CA, as well as other regional psychological association meetings. These abstracts cover a wide variety of topics, and are a quick way to access upcoming trends in psychology research and publications.

Monthly PsycEXTRA content announcements are published on the PsycINFO Listserv. To subscribe to this listerv, or if you have any gray or fugitive literature you would like to share, please contact us at: psycextra@apa.org.
In Search Of: Methodology

The Methodology field, which was added to PsycINFO records in 2005, identifies the specific kind of methodology used in a research study (quantitative study, clinical case study, etc.) This field allows greater specificity in searching and is often used by PsycINFO’s advanced users. The field values for Methodologies were also revised in 2005 by a team of PsycINFO staff and outside experts.

In 2007, the much-requested Systematic Review value was added to the Methodology field. Systematic Review is a subfield of Literature Review and is applied to articles that are identified as systematic reviews in the methodology section of the article. Systematic Review has been mapped back to older records to allow users to retrieve relevant older content.

Currently, there are 16 possible values in the Methodology field.

Clinical Case Study
  Empirical Study
    Experimental Replication
    Followup Study
    Longitudinal Study
      Prospective Study
      Retrospective Study
  Field Study
  Literature Review
    Systematic Review (New in 2007)
Mathematical Model
Meta Analysis
Nonclinical Case Study
Qualitative Study
Quantitative Study
Treatment Outcome/Randomized Clinical Trial

Because PsycINFO is delivered on multiple vendor platforms, the implementation of this feature differs across the platforms. Most vendor platforms allow users to select methodology as a field value in the main search box (if you know the name of the research method you’d like to search) or to refine their search to a specific methodology in the limits section of the interface. In the limits section, the Methodology field values are provided in a clickable list. Many platforms also provide an index to the Methodology field that allows users to view all values for the field.

Search Example

Professors often teach their students about different research methods. A common assignment is for students to compare two different methodologies. In this example, a professor has asked his students to compare a clinical case study and a randomized clinical trial. The student has chosen to research depression in teens.

The student selected this citation for his clinical case study:

Interpersonal Theory and Music Techniques: A Case Study for a Family With a Depressed Adolescent.
By Hendricks, C. Breet, Bradley, Loretta J.
The Family Journal. 2005 Oct Vol 13(4) 400-405

Index Terms:
  *Interpersonal Development*, *Interpersonal Psychotherapy*, *Major Depression*, *Music Therapy*, *Psychotherapeutic Techniques*

Classification Codes:
  3507 Art & Music Movement Therapy
  Population Group:
    Human, Male
  Age Group:
    Adolescents (13-17 yrs)

Methodology:
  3200 Clinical Case Study

continued on page 6
Methodology continued from page 5

The student ran the search again, but selected Treatment Outcome/Randomized Clinical Trial.

The student chose to submit this record for randomized clinical trial:

Definitions of methodology field values are available at http://www.apa.org/databases/training/method-values.html. You can also download a PDF chart of the definitions for instructional use at http://www.apa.org/databases/training/method-values.pdf.

Librarian Training & Support Forum

At the Librarian’s Roundtable Breakfast at ALA in June 2007, several librarians expressed an interest in having APA host a community webpage where librarians could post training and support materials they have developed about the APA databases.

APA plans to create such a site in the near future, but in the meantime, links to such materials will appear in the PsycINFO News. The previous issue of the PsycINFO News (Volume 26, Issue 4, Fall 2007, http://www.apa.org/databases/pin/07fal.pdf contained information provided to APA by librarians about a number of tutorials and training support materials. If you would like to contribute to this list (whether it’s something you or your institution has created or something that you’ve seen elsewhere), please contact us at psycinfo@apa.org. This forum is for you, by you. Please contribute!

Training and Support Materials for APA Databases

Training at Conferences

PsycINFO provides training sessions at these major library conferences:

- ALA Midwinter
- MLA
- SLA
- ALA Annual

Training generally consists of updates on all 5 databases plus new fields, new features, and search examples on major vendor platforms. These training sessions are tailored to the audience, and we always make time for questions. At conferences, these sessions are accompanied by a catered meal. We also offer individual training and consultations at our booth.

Training and Information on Database Features in PsycINFO Newsletters

http://www.apa.org/databases/pin/

Winter 2007
How To Use PsycEXTRA p. 2
Psychology Focus: Terrorism pp. 4-5

Spring 2007
In Search Of: Tests and Measures pp. 5-6

Live Web Training

Web training sessions are available at a variety of times to suit time zone differences. All sessions require Internet access and a separate phone line.

To request training, please contact us at psycinfo@apa.org or 1-800-374-2722

We will set up a time with you to conduct a training session and send you an email confirmation with instructions for joining the conference.
Online Presentations

You can view or link to presentations we have given in the past showing APA PsycNET®, APA’s new search platform, for your own use at this address: http://www.apa.org/librarians/tutorials.html

We also provide training examples on vendor platforms.

Quick Reference Guides

Quick reference guides for searching PsycINFO are available for these vendor platforms: APA PsycNET, EBSCOhost, OCLC FirstSearch, OvidSP, and ProQuest’s CSA Illumina. All are available in 8” x 11” PDF format downloadable from the Librarian’s Resource Center under the “Search Guides” link http://www.apa.org/databases/training/searchguides.html.

APA PsycNET, EBSCOhost, OvidSP, and ProQuest’s CSA Illumina quick reference guides are also available in a pocket-sized guide that can be distributed to students and faculty. You can order quantities of the pocket-sized guide by contacting psycinfo@apa.org.

As vendors upgrade their systems, we will work to update the quick reference guides. Check back at the Librarians Resource Center (http://www.apa.org/librarians/) for these updated guides.

Interdisciplinary Application Guides

Because of the interdisciplinary coverage in PsycINFO, we created a series of application guides that provide insight on using PsycINFO for each discipline. Each guide features selected index terms from the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms as well as sample citations.

We currently have guides on PsycINFO for the following specialties:

❖ Consumer Psychology
❖ Education
❖ Law
❖ Military Psychology
❖ Neuroscience
❖ Nursing
❖ Organizational Behavior
❖ Psychopharmacology
❖ Sports Psychology

Translated versions of these guides are now available in French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

We have recently upgraded the format of our guides and now have expanded application guides for:

❖ Nutrition & Dietetics
❖ Education
❖ Gerontology

This format will be used as we update current guides and create new guides.

We also have guides for these topics in PsycEXTRA:

❖ Consumer Health
❖ Education
❖ Public Health

The guides can be accessed at http://www.apa.org/librarians/toolkit/guides.html. Print copies of many of the English language guides are available free of charge by emailing psycinfo@apa.org.

We’d like input from you. Is there any other type of training or support material we can provide for you? Please send ideas and suggestions to psycinfo@apa.org.
APA Soliciting Nominations for 2008 APA Excellence in Librarianship Award

The American Psychological Association presented its first Excellence in Librarianship Award to Dr. Mark Stover, Assistant University Librarian for Research Services at San Diego State University Library at the Educational & Behavioral Sciences Section (EBBS) Research Forum at the annual meeting of the American Library Association on June 23, 2007.

APA is soliciting nominations for the 2008 APA Excellence in Librarianship Award, to be presented at the EBBS Research Forum at the June 2008 ALA meeting in Anaheim, California.

This award was created to recognize an outstanding contribution to psychology and behavioral sciences librarianship including instructions, project development, publications, research, or service. The award consists of a certificate and $2,500, and is open to both librarians and allied professionals with at least 5 years of professional experience.

Examples include these:
- Development and implementation of new curricula or instructional programs
- Innovative teaching methods
- Outstanding research contributions
- Demonstrated service in an organization that supports research
- Development of a collection, access tool, or innovative reference
- Publications such as books, journal articles, websites, or multimedia products

This award will recognize work completed within the last five years.

To apply, please submit the following:

a. A résumé or CV
b. Nomination statement (self-nomination or nominate someone else; Describe the contribution and its significance within and outside of your institution)
c. Examples of work (photocopies, CDs, URL links, etc.)
d. Letters of support (no more than 3; at least one letter from a dean or organizational leader outside the immediate work area)

The application deadline is April 4, 2008. Send application materials to:
Customer Relations • APA Library Award
American Psychological Association/PsycINFO
750 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4242
Email: psycinfo@apa.org
Web: http://www.apa.org/librarians/award.html

2008 Exhibit, Conference, and Training Schedule

April 2008

UKSG • April 9 • Torquay, England

Special Event
Focus Group
For more information or to enroll, please e-mail PsycINFO@apa.org

May 2008

Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) 22nd Annual Conference
April 30–May 4 • Pittsburgh, PA

Special Event
Training Session, A Multidisciplinary Approach to Research on Human Behavior
For more information or to enroll, please e-mail PsycINFO@apa.org

Medical Library Association Annual Meeting
• May 16–21 • Chicago, IL

Special Events
Sunrise Seminar
Librarian’s Roundtable Lunch
For more information or to enroll, please e-mail PsycINFO@apa.org

June 2008

Special Libraries Association Annual Conference • June 15–18 • Seattle, WA
Please watch the Librarian’s Resource Center (http://www.apa.org/librarians/exhibits.html) for 2008 training sessions, conferences, and exhibits.