

LIBRARY CORNER

By Anita R. Barney

Going beyond Google

When you're looking for information, do you turn to Google first? Sometimes that's appropriate, and sometimes there are better alternatives.

If your knee hurts, you might think that you have arthritis. OK, turn on the computer, go to www.google.com, and search for information on arthritis. You get ten pages of hits, with at least two ads at the top of each page. One hit is for the Internet Arthritis Center for Pain Management. The description says it offers "a natural arthritis approach with pain management solutions. ... All products have been tested by me, your friendly webmaster, a fellow arthritis sufferer . . .". Maybe it's a useful site, or maybe it's a scam, trying to sell you a useless "drug". What about www.arthritis-glucosamine.net and www.glucosamine-arthritis.org? What's the difference? Are these legitimate sites?

Here's an alternative. Go to www.iCONN.org, the Connecticut Digital Library (or go to The Brookfield Library's home page at www.brookfieldlibrary.org and select databases on the left side of the page). You'll need a current Connecticut library card to access iCONN from home or work. One of the iCONN choices is the Health and Wellness Center. Type arthritis in the search box, and you'll be referred to articles from the New England Journal of Medicine, Harvard Special Medical Reports, and other recognized medical sites. You'll have the ability to narrow your search, find a definition of a condition, search for information about a drug, and even find alternative health resources.

So what's iCONN? Put bluntly, it's your state income tax dollars at work. That chunk of money that vanishes from your paycheck every week doesn't just pave the roads and keep the Department of Motor Vehicles open. Some of it funds the Connecticut Digital Library.

iCONN began in 2000, when the Connecticut General Assembly provided funding for the purchase of licensed information databases for Connecticut's libraries, schools, and colleges, as well as access from home and work. Lt. Governor Jodi Rell was instrumental in securing funding for iCONN.

What will you find among the iCONN databases? In addition to health information, there is a wonderful assortment of homework help resources for students from elementary school through college. These are curriculum-based, and include full-text magazines, almanacs, maps, and news articles.

You have access to the full text of six newspapers: The Christian Science Monitor, Hartford Courant, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post.

You'll find company and industry information in the Business & Company Resource Center; history, literature, biography, science, and social studies in the Discovering Collection; family history and genealogy resources in HeritageQuest; biographies of over 120,000 people in Wilson Biographies Plus; and periodicals covering all academic concentrations in Expanded Academic ASAP. You'll also have access to ¡Informe! for Spanish-language periodicals, and a Professional Collection of full-text periodicals for teachers, school administrators, school media specialists, and librarians. And if that's not enough, InfoTrac OneFile and General Reference Center Gold allow you to search a huge variety of general-interest publications.

So if you're looking for the web site for The Brookfield Journal, or a list of greyhound rescue organizations, go to Google. If you need authoritative, screened information, use iCONN, the Connecticut Digital Library.

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