After BIOETHICSLINE: Online Searching of the Bioethics Literature

From 1979 through December 2000, the Kennedy Institute of Ethics produced BIOETHICSLINE for the National Library of Medicine (NLM) as one of NLM’s specialty MEDLARS databases designed to augment MEDLINE (the online version of Index Medicus). NLM is in the process of integrating these small specialty MEDLARS databases into two large databases: PubMed, a bibliographic database of journal citations linked in some cases to full-text materials (articles, books, and fact sheets) and/or to genetic sequence information; and LOCATORplus, an online catalog of books and similar types of publications.

As of October 2001, BIOETHICSLINE monographic records were loaded into the monographic database LOCATORplus (http://locatorplus.gov), and new records for these publication types are added to LOCATORplus on an ongoing basis. In addition, NLM has begun the transfer of BIOETHICSLINE journal records to PubMed (http://pubmed.gov). These records now constitute part of a “Bioethics Subset” of MEDLINE, to which new records will be added on an ongoing basis. A future enhancement to the new retrieval system is the Gateway (http://gateway.nlm.nih.gov), which is designed to offer cross-searching of several databases simultaneously.

We provide the following search strategies and tips to assist our patrons in searching for bioethics records in these “new” databases.

Using the Bioethics Subset When Searching PubMed

The Bioethics Subset is an easy-to-use search limiter designed to help users focus their search results on bioethical issues. The subset is based on a pre-built strategy that looks for (1) journals that commonly publish articles on bioethics; (2) Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), the terms used most often to index these articles (both as unique terms and in combi-
nation with other terms); (3) frequently used ethics-related textwords; and (4) any records indexed by the Kennedy Institute of Ethics bibliographers.

When searching PubMed, the Bioethics Subset can be used to restrict retrieval results by specifying it as a limit from the Subsets pull-down menu at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov:80/entrez/query/static/help/pmhlp.html#Subsets. Other limits may be chosen as well to further refine the results (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov:80/entrez/query/static/help/pmhlp.html#Limits). The Bioethics Subset also can be employed as part of the search statement itself by combining the term bioethics with the delimiter [sb]. For example: autonomy AND bioethics[sb]

To review the structure of the Bioethics Subset, go to http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/pubmed_subsets/bioethics_strategy.html. At present, however, even within the Gateway, the Bioethics Subset search limiter works only on the journal records in MEDLINE. A different strategy for limiting LOCATORplus searches to bioethics-related records is suggested below.

LIMITING RETRIEVAL TO BIOETHICS LITERATURE WHEN SEARCHING LOCATORPLUS

When searching LocatorPlus, we recommend that you use the Advanced Search Menu. In the initial search query box, enter a word or phrase. We suggest enclosing it in quotation marks, selecting: “as a phrase” in the next box, and requesting “Search In: Keyword Anywhere.” Then combine your search by selecting: “AND” and inserting: “ethics KIE” into the second search query box, selecting: “any of these,” and “Search In: Keyword Anywhere.” Your search statement will look like this:

Search For: “posthumous reproduction” as a phrase, Search In: Keyword Anywhere; AND Search For: ethics KIE any of these, Search In: Keyword Anywhere; then select: Search.

As of this writing, the system retrieves 13 citations.

If the retrieved records include such statements as: Library Location: Not at NLM, Call Number: Not held at NLM, and Status: No item data available, it is likely that the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRC) owns the book.

SEARCHING GEORGE FOR BIOETHICS BOOKS

GEORGE (http://141.161.93.5) contains records for most of the 26,000 books in the NRC, and subject access is by Library of Congress Subject
Headings, or simply by the numbers used in the NRC Classification Scheme (http://www.georgetown.edu/research/nrcbl/class.htm). For example, searching 15.10 as a Subject will retrieve 171 books that are all or in part about Genome Mapping. Sorting by year of publication is available on the Limit/Sort page, and you may download your retrieval via e-mail.

ONGOING SEARCH ASSISTANCE FROM THE NRC

Updates on searching techniques will appear on the NRC’s website. We ask your patience as we work with NLM through the transition. Remember that you can request a bibliographic search via the web (http://www.georgetown.edu/research/nrcbl/searchform.htm) or by phone—888-BIO-ETHX (in the U.S. and Canada) or +202-687-3885 elsewhere—or fax at 202-687-6770.

A Home for the National Bioethics Advisory Commission Electronic Archive

On 3 October 2001, the National Bioethics Advisory Commission (NBAC), an 18-member advisory board established by Executive Order 12975 on 3 October 1995 and chartered on 20 October 1999 to make recommendations to the National Science and Technology Council, ceased operation. The National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature was selected to preserve the electronic archive and copies of printed documentation of NBAC’s work. Consequently, NBAC’s former website is now available in its entirety at: http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/nbac. The print documents have been added to the collection of archival materials at the NRC.

Providing a historical record of the work of the Commission, the website is a wealth of background material and substantive documentation arising from NBAC’s deliberations. The full text of summary reports, recommendations, and commissioned papers, as well as agendas and transcripts of all public meetings, can be accessed at no cost. A detailed list of reports follows:
We invite you to explore this new addition to the NRC website and to review other resources available at http://bioethics.georgetown.edu.