News from the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRCBL) and the National Information Resource on Ethics and Human Genetics (NIREHG)

The website of the Kennedy Institute’s Library and Information Services (LIS) offers a variety of timely, comprehensive resources supporting bioethics research. Simply visit the LIS home page at: http://bioethics.georgetown.edu to enter a virtual world of information on all areas of bioethics, including environmental ethics and emerging issues in science and technology. Following are a few highlights of recent developments along with search tips for those who wish to explore the ETHXWeb and GenETHX databases on their own. Please remember that there is no fee for custom bibliographies; simply complete the online form provided on the website to ask the reference staff to prepare a bibliography for you or help you with search strategy.

INDEXING THE GENETICS LITERATURE FOR THE GENETHX DATABASE

A new initiative to assign indexing terms to the genetics literature began in May 2007 with financial support from the U.S. National Human Genome Research Institute. NIREHG bibliographers produced a supplement to the Bioethics Thesaurus that contains 72 genetics-related Keyword Descriptors (subject terms in a controlled indexing vocabulary). Some of these Keywords—e.g., CLINICAL GENETICS, GENETIC ANCESTRY, GENETIC DISCRIMINATION, GENETIC RELATEDNESS TIES, and HUMAN GENOME DIVERSITY PROJECT—are, as far as we know, unique to any thesaurus.

By December 2007, more than 1,100 documents in the GenETHX database were indexed with Keyword Descriptors from the Bioethics Thesaurus. These documents also were indexed, as appropriate, with non-Thesaurus Keyword Identifiers (proper nouns, including the names of persons, agencies and other corporate bodies, laws, court decisions, and geographic names) and Keyword Proposed Descriptors (terms under consideration for inclusion in future editions of the Bioethics Thesaurus). Eventually, all GenETHX documents selected for inclusion in the Bibliography of Bioethics will be indexed, thereby providing very
precise retrieval of relevant information on the ethical, legal, and social implications of genetics research and applications. For more about this project and how to search by keywords, please see: http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/nirehg/.

EXPANDED QUICKBIBS

We encourage those who prefer to access bibliographic information in a hurry to explore QuickBibs, customized topic-specific searches of the ETHXWeb and GenETHX databases. Scores of QuickBibs may be used as starting points for performing research on topics such as Abortion, Eugenics, Genetics, Nanotechnology, Organ Donation, Reproductive Technologies, and Stem Cell Research. These searches are freely available from the LIS home page at: “RETRIEVE a bibliography on a bioethics topic.”

TIPS FOR SEARCHING THE ETHXWEB AND GENETHX DATABASES

Search Tip #1: Expand Your Searches with an Author Search

If searching a topic produces limited results, and if a researcher has the name of even one author, sometimes more citations can be found by doing an author search. To do this, type in the author’s last name and limit the search to the author field. One example is Veatch[au]. This search will retrieve other citations written by Veatch that may be relevant and missed earlier in a topic search. This search strategy may also produce the names of coauthors, which then can be searched as above by the author’s name. Searching by author’s name in the ETHXWeb database also is useful if an article has footnotes and references, which can be used as the sources for more names of authors.

Search Tip #2: Limit Your Searches to Audiovisuals, Case Studies, Empirical Research, etc.

If you are looking for particular formats, remember to use the pull-down menu on the “Advanced” search screen. For example, to retrieve audiovisuals about ethical issues in genetics, enter 15.+ (to represent the genetics category, using the “+” to expand the search to all sub-categories on the classification scheme) in the “Primary Subject” box and select: “Audiovisual Material” from the “Publication Type” pull-down menu. Click on the “Search” button to retrieve 66 relevant items.

Alternatively, you may want to search for materials written from a particular perspective. Keep in mind the subject caption [sc] field label. Subject captions are limited to the following: an = analytical, cs = case studies, em = empirical, le = legal, po = popular, and rv = review; these abbreviations now appear on the citations retrieved along with the classification numbers.
Example: 20.5.2[pc] and em[sc] retrieves empirical studies on allowing minors to die;  
Example: 9.4[pc] and an[sc] retrieves analytical essays about resource allocation.

Three additional perspectives—legal, philosophical, and religious—can be searched by using the pull-down menus on the “Advanced” and “Boolean” search screens under the heading “General Approach.”

**RELAUNCH OF DNA PATENT DATABASE**
(http://dnapatents.georgetown.edu)

As of 1 November 2007, the DNA Patent Database, running on new software, is sporting redesigned search pages. Use this database to find both U.S. patents and applications for patents related to human DNA. We welcome any comments, questions, or suggestions for improvement of the new design from our users.

**TWO CLASSIC EUGENICS BOOKS NOW ONLINE**

Through a cooperative agreement with Duke University’s Institute for Genome Sciences and Policy, the following classics in the history of American eugenics have been converted to machine readable format:


and


These and many more items are available free of charge on the NIREHG website at http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/nirehg/. Please access the “Digital Collection Project” from the sidebar menu.

**OHRP MATERIALS ON RESEARCH PROTECTIONS NOW ONLINE**

The Office for Human Research Protections hosts the Digital Archive for the Protection of Human Subjects (http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/nrc/collections/ohrp.htm). Supported by an OHRP contract with the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, selected documents in the Institute’s library were digitized to make these historic materials accessible to researchers at OHRP’s website.
A core component of the OHRP Digital Archive is the set of historic pre-1995 *Federal Register* Notices on human subject protections, all have been posted at the OHRP archive. In addition, the reports and appendices of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research have been digitized and will be made available through the OHRP Digital Archive.

MORE FULL TEXT BIOETHICS SYLLABI AVAILABLE ONLINE

In 2007, NRCBL launched its syllabus exchange collection as a searchable database, which now contains 614 syllabi, of which 208 are available freely in digital form. Digitization of the remaining collection is in progress. This new database allows users to search the collection by subject, course type/level, and whether the item is available online, as well as by professor, institution, or course title. Click on “FIND . . . syllabi” from the LIS home page.

INTERNATIONAL BIOETHICS ORGANIZATIONS DATABASE (ORGS)

The ORGS database contains records to over 1400 organizations, 130 of which were added in 2007. More than 700 of these organizations have websites, and more than 800 are outside the United States. Click on “FIND . . . organizations” on the LIS home page.

ONLINE PUBLICATIONS PROGRAM

*New Titles in Bioethics*

In 2006, *New Titles in Bioethics* moved from a print-based publication to an online-only publication. This now monthly update of new books covers publications related to biomedical, philosophical, religious, and applied ethics. Past annual cumulations from 2000 through 2005 as well as quarterly issues for 2006 are available in Adobe PDF. Dynamic searches of the NRCBL’s ETHXWeb database that used to identify items that would appear in the upcoming quarterly issue now are available on a monthly basis. Simply click on “FIND Publications” on the [http://bioethics.georgetown.edu](http://bioethics.georgetown.edu) home page.

*Scope Note Series*

The *Scope Note* Series, entirely online now, presents current overviews of issues and viewpoints related to specific topics in biomedical ethics for scholars, journalists, medical and legal practitioners, students, and interested laypersons. All sources cited are in the NRCBL. Topics can be updated by clicking on “RETRIEVE a bibliography” at the LIS homepage.
NRCBL NEWS

VIEW A SNAPSHOT OF LIBRARY EXHIBIT ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTING WEB PAGES

In 2007—a very busy year for the library staff—we exhibited at the annual meetings of the American Library Association (ALA), the Medical Library Association (MLA), the American Public Health Association (APHA), and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH). Library staff also developed a web page for the 33rd Annual Intensive Bioethics Course (IBC) held by the Kennedy Institute of Ethics. Customized search strategies on topics under discussion at APHA, ASBH, and IBC were posted on the web, and these routinely-updated, specialized resources are available at: http://bioethics.georgetown.edu/nrc/bibliographies.htm.

PRINT PUBLICATIONS PROGRAM

LIS continues to produce two reference resources in print: the Bibliography of Bioethics and the Bioethics Searcher’s Guide to Online Information Resources. Volume 33 of the Bibliography of Bioethics, published in September 2007, contains 8,779 citations within 848 pages. A focused reference resource covering bioethics literature, the Bibliography is organized by concept to provide an annual snapshot of discussion on a given topic. Volume 33 includes abstracts from selected periodicals. Journal and newspaper articles, web documents, government reports, reports of international organizations, and book chapters appear in one subject entry section for periodicals, which is accompanied by an author index. Book/monograph literature is organized both by subject and by title. Previous volumes of the Bibliography are available at a reduced price! Click on “FIND publications” for sample pages and ordering information.

The 2007 edition of the Bioethics Searcher’s Guide to Online Information Resources offers a comprehensive overview of how to develop bioethics-oriented search strategies for the ETHXWeb, GenETHX, PubMed, NLM Catalog, and other international databases. More than 300,000 bibliographic records are available FREE on the Internet, many with links to full text. This manual explains how to access the information by devising precise strategies tailored to specific interests. Click on “FIND publications for ordering information.

We invite our readers to use LIS resources and provide feedback to NRCBL/NIREHG staff at: bioethics@georgetown.edu.