



## Books and other media

### Livres et autres documents

#### CD-ROM

### AIDS Compact Library 1996-1997

Edited by Deborah Cotton. Appleton & Lange New Media; Electronic Press Ltd., Cambridge, Mass. 1995. Price not stated. ISBN 0-8385-0296-2

<b>Overall rating:</b>	Good
<b>Strengths:</b>	User-friendly interface; commonly used search strategies; complete online help database
<b>Weaknesses:</b>	None, apart from those of any simple reference CD-ROM
<b>Audience:</b>	Clinicians and researchers working in the area of AIDS; any health care professional seeking up-to-date information on AIDS
<b>System requirements:</b>	DOS version: 386 MHz processor, 3 MB free hard drive space, 2 MB RAM (4 MB recommended), CD-ROM drive, MS-DOS version 3.3, VGA monitor; Windows 3.1 version: same as DOS version, except 4 MB RAM (8 MB recommended); Macintosh version: Macintosh LC, 3 MB hard drive space, 4 MB RAM (8 MB recommended), CD-ROM drive, System 7, 12" or larger colour monitor

This medical reference CD-ROM contains an extensive collection of information on almost all aspects of AIDS. There is a huge database of citations from various well-known medical journals, categorized by their source and the nature of the research.

If you are familiar with performing literature searches, then you are no stranger to the interface of this CD-ROM. As a reference library, it contains most of the tools needed to retrieve information by either key words or concepts related to key words. The search strategies are best

described as a simplified version of complex commercial engines such as MEDLINE, and their use is well described in the manual.

Results of the search can be loosely associated with the requested key word by using a fuzzy-logic option or closely linked by using a relational option; a dictionary and thesaurus are also provided to assist the user. While viewing the results, the user may highlight any portion of the text, cut it and paste it to the search window to provide a faster search.

Full text of many articles are also available right on the CD-ROM. The user may bookmark important positions in the database or print out any portion of an article for reference. During each session, the program also produces a history of all of the searches and results, which can be saved or printed. The user can also make notes in the blank margins at his or her convenience.

The interface of the Windows 3.1 version is very user-friendly, with all controls accessible through the mouse whenever possible. The user's manual is very small and simple, but this is compensated for by a rich online help database. This help file has much the same interface as the AIDS database. The display is standard, clear and well organized.

The technical support is readily accessible and friendly. If necessary, technical-support staff will walk you through the problem step by step. Unfortunately, in this age of the Internet, the publisher, Appleton & Lange, does not offer Internet support, nor does its computer technical support service, Electronic Press. The CD-ROM is updated quarterly. The package comes with 4 free future updates; however, the cost of subsequent updates is not mentioned in the package.

This CD-ROM contains several volumes' worth of AIDS-related texts, transformed into an electronic version and supplemented with tools to facilitate their retrieval. The *AIDS Compact Library* is a very good reference in a medical CD-ROM library, and I would recommend it to any researcher or clinician working in the area of AIDS as a concentrated and up-to-date source of information.

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#### BOOKS

### The Troubled Helix: Social and Psychological Implications of the New Human Genetics

Edited by Theresa Marteau and Martin Richards. 359 pp. Cambridge University Press, New York. 1996. US\$64.95. ISBN 0-521-46288-6

<b>Overall rating:</b>	Excellent
<b>Strengths:</b>	Comprehensive, objective and readable
<b>Weaknesses:</b>	No significant weaknesses
<b>Audience:</b>	Health care professionals, psychologists, social scientists and well-informed public

This book is yet another addition to the rapidly expanding literature on the medical, ethical, legal and social implications of the developments in human genetics. It is a particularly satisfying contribution in terms of the wide range of topics, the breadth and depth of the material presented and the objectivity of the presentation.

In the first of the book's 3 sections, the reader is immediately gripped by a series of personal sto-



ries by people with direct experience of genetic testing. All of the stories are poignant and reflect the rapid evolution of testing options that families face. The book highlights the burden placed on individuals and their families by genetic conditions. This section introduces a recurring theme, namely, that those with first-hand experience of genetic disease and testing have been heard very little in comparison with professionals.

The second section of the book deals with the major areas that constitute the practice of clinical genetics. Essential for overall understanding is a very useful, condensed, but comprehensive account of the content and techniques of the new genetics. Other chapters deal extensively with the objectives and practice of genetic counselling, including research attempts to elucidate the processes of communication and decision-making and the perception of risk. Genetic testing, in the different contexts of adult-onset disease, reproduction and the testing of children, is also considered. Child testing has recently been subject of several generally restrictive policy statements by various professional bodies. This topic is given a separate chapter in which many aspects of these recommendations are persuasively questioned in light of the inadequacy of available data and the bias resulting from excessive professional input.

The final section of this book deals with the social milieu in which the new genetics is practised. There are chapters on the history of the eugenics movement, ethics and law, racism, kinship and feminist viewpoints. Most compelling is an exploration of the public understanding of genetics. This discussion incorporates a description of new research approaches to measuring the social representation of genetics to which the public is exposed. It emphasizes

the limits of improving biologic knowledge.

These contributions have been assembled from a wide variety of experts and are valuable on their own. In addition, the editors have done an admirable job of enhancing the book's readability.

This is a valuable and well-referenced compilation on the social and psychologic issues raised by genetic testing today — an ever more important topic. Although it deals with issues in some depth, it can easily be read by those who do not have a background in the relevant disciplines. I hope that all readers will heed the call for greater and wider consideration of the concerns raised.

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### **Medicine and the Internet: Introducing Online Resources and Terminology**

Bruce C. McKenzie. 206 pp. Illust. Oxford University Press, Oxford, England; Oxford University Press Canada, Don Mills, Ont. 1996. \$39.50. ISBN 0-19-262705-8

<b>Overall rating:</b>	Excellent
<b>Strengths:</b>	Clear, concise and comprehensive; helps anyone get up and running on the Internet; contains plenty of guidance for use of the Internet in medical practice
<b>Weaknesses:</b>	The World Wide Web could have been given a bigger proportion of the book
<b>Audience:</b>	All physicians; targeted at computer neophytes

**T**his is an exceptional book. It stands head and shoulders above the crowd of poorly written books put out hurriedly to cash in on the recent interest in the Internet. Author Bruce McKenzie actually delivers

what he advertises: a book that can bring a physician who knows little about computing and nothing about the Internet to the point of using the Internet as part of his or her everyday practice.

McKenzie assumes nothing about his readers. He starts from the basics of what type of computer to consider, through modems and Internet providers. If you do not know what these terms mean, you will before you are half-way through the book. If you do know, you will not be insulted by patronizing chapters, and you will still learn something.

You might expect a British book to be full of information on Internet sites and resources that are irrelevant to Canadian physicians. However, except for the Internet provider list, all of the sites mentioned can be reached from anywhere in the world. McKenzie does not overlook *CMA Online* or McMaster University's Cochrane Collaboration site.

The section on online ethics contains information I have never seen anywhere else. Besides the usual "netiquette" for e-mail and newsgroups, it discusses how to cite an online source in a research paper. It also introduces some subjects that have to be addressed in the near future. These include confidentiality, the reliability of information on the Internet and the ethics of using references from Internet resources that may disappear. All of these topics have long worried me. McKenzie does not have any pat answers, but he asks the questions well.

The sections on older Internet services, such as Veronica, Archie and gopher, are lucid descriptions of these features and their use. However, today most users have a "net browser" and, in fact, think that the Internet *is* the World Wide Web (WWW). This part of the Internet will grow.

McKenzie spends more time than I would discussing Com-