Pipe Dreams

Opium “does more honour to medicine to any other remedy whatever.” Charles Alston, professor of Botany and Materia Medica at Edinburgh University, wrote this statement in a 1742 article. Alston was the first person in England to grow poppies for his experiments and lauded in print all the beneficial effects of the flower. He did not, however, mention its addictive properties. A fellow Edinbourgeois, the surgeon Charles Young wrote one of the first treatises on opium partly in response to Alston’s uncritical praise of the drug. In the preface to his 1743 Treatise on Opium, Young said that “opium is a poison by which great numbers are daily destroyed.” Although Young was correct in his mention of opiate addiction, it didn’t stop him from using it or prescribing it to treat coughing, diarrhea, toothache, prolapsed hemorrhoids, and many other ailments. Most particularly, he advocated opium to alleviate “lowness of Spirits” and melancholia. Indeed so.

Young was an outstanding surgeon during the period of the Scottish Enlightenment. He was the only surgeon elected to the prestigious and very intellectual Ranken Club. He did not have a medical degree, but that was not unusual at the time. His medical practice and his philosophy were based in empiricism, which should be expected of a contemporary of David Hume. This empirical viewpoint is illustrated in the title of the book, where Young says his study is “founded Upon Practical Observations.”

The Sealy Library recently acquired Young’s important treatise on a drug used and abused for centuries. John Jay is one of three libraries in New York City to own this book, and the only non-medical library. Once again, we must emphasize the importance of such historical works to the study of our discipline.

Larry E. Sullivan, Chief Librarian
Benjamin Ward Reception

Tania Colmant-Donabedian

On February 19, 2014, the College commemorated the 30th anniversary of the appointment of Benjamin Ward as the first African American New York City Police Commissioner. This was marked by a special Lloyd Sealy colloquium, moderated by Sam Roberts of the New York Times, with panelists David Scott, former chief of department at the NYPD, Herbert Sturz of the Vera Institute, and Martin Horn of John Jay College. It was preceded by opening remarks by New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, President Jeremy Travis, Chief Librarian Larry E. Sullivan, NOBLE's Vice President Gregory Thomas, and Mary Ward-Markane, the daughter of Benjamin Ward. Larry E. Sullivan highlighted the Benjamin Ward Papers, a collection first donated to the Library in 2009 and later expanded in 2011 and 2012. A selection of these materials was exhibited, including letters to Ward from Governor Carey, Mayors Lindsay and Koch, commemorative photo albums of NOBLE and NAACP events, and numerous photographs of Ward at different stages of his illustrious career. Apart from correspondence, photographs, articles and speeches by Ward, the Benjamin Ward Papers include the manuscript of Ward’s memoir Top Cop and a transcript of an interview with Ward by the Columbia University Oral History Office. Benjamin Ward, it must be recalled, assumed command of the NYPD during a period of heightened crime which he confronted with a vigorous campaign of drug-, prostitution- and gambling-related arrests. He came to national attention for his emphasis on community policing, which at the time was embraced across the country as a better approach to policing. His career was not without controversy as evidenced in the notorious 1988 Tompkins Park Square Riot that took place under his watch as Commissioner and his handling of a highly charged 1972 Harlem Mosque incident that occurred while he was the Deputy Commissioner of Community Affairs.

A selection of the Benjamin Ward Papers remains on display in the Niederhoffer Lounge of the Library.
News

Faculty notes

Associate Dean and Chief Librarian Larry E. Sullivan published the book *The Brownsville Boys: Jewish Gangsters of Murder, Inc* in December 2013 with the Two Ponds Press. The book, with all its plates, framed is on exhibition in the President’s Gallery through May 30 and was featured in the *New York Times* on March 20. His co-authored (with Brenda Vogel) article, “Reachin’ Behind Bars: Library Outreach to Prisoners, 1798-2000,” first published in 2003 and then again in 2009, has been reprinted in John Kleinig and Charles Sturts’ edited volume *Prisoners’ Rights* (Ashgate 2014). In January, Sullivan spoke on the importance of Special Collections for Criminal Justice libraries at the American Librarian Association Midwinter Meeting Philadelphia. He is also Editor-in-Chief of the recently published (April 2014) *Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Annual: Global Perspectives*, to which Ellen Sexton and Maria Kiriakova contributed articles.


Faculty, students, and artists attended the Brownsville Boys reception on April 2. The exhibit will remain open until May 30.
Research across majors
Lunch with faculty

Marta Bladek

On March 10, more than 30 students attended a session on Research Across Majors. A part of the Majors & Minors campaign, this student-faculty lunch was co-organized by Shelley Germana from SASP and Marta Bladek from the Library, who received the Faculty Student Engagement grant to provide pizza and refreshments. John Jay faculty, Professors Teresa Booker (African Studies), Ric Curtis (Anthropology), Samantha Majic (Political Science) and Dante Tawfeeq (Mathematics and Computer Science) shared their thoughts on doing research in and beyond the disciplines. Students deciding on a major or minor learned how research and its methods differ across fields and how the research skills they hone in college relate to their lives as aspiring professionals, engaged community members, and everyday consumers of information.

New York Times Academic Pass

Free digital subscription available to CUNY students, faculty, & staff

Maureen Richards & Robin Davis

Thanks to CUNY college libraries and the CUNY Council of Chief Librarians, anyone with a valid CUNY email address may now sign up for a free Academic Pass annual digital subscription to the New York Times!

To claim your subscription, visit:

lib.jjay.cuny.edu/nyt

Your digital subscription gives you access to nytimes.com and New York Times smartphone apps that can be downloaded from nytimes.com/mobile. (It does not include the New York Times tablet apps, but you can access the tablet-friendly nytimes.com using your tablet’s browser.) Your subscription will last 52 weeks from your sign-up date and can be renewed again for free with your CUNY email address next year.

If you already have an annual subscription to the New York Times with your John Jay email address, you can cancel it and receive a refund. If you wish to continue your own access (for example, If you get the print edition with online access), but also want to use the John Jay version, we suggest you change your original subscription to a personal email address.

Access to articles on nytimes.com for the date range 1923–1980 is limited to 5 articles for your annual subscription period. However, the John Jay College Library provides full access to the New York Times Historical File database with digitally reproduced pages from every single issue starting in 1851.

Let your students know that they have free access to a New York Times digital subscription, too!
Students asked. We listened.
Library survey results
Bonnie Nelson

What did you do in the Library today?
Think deeply about life. Sleep.
What can we do to make this library better for you? More access to electrical outlets...Why are they still located in walls?

These were some of the questions and answers from our second triennial survey of “in-library use,” conducted November 18-23, 2013. 294 library users (90% undergraduates and 9.8% graduate students) took the time to fill out a paper survey handed to them at the Library entrance. The results showed that our library users are a serious bunch: 51% came to the Library to study or work individually; 44.4% used a library computer for academic/course work and only 11% used a computer for Facebook, YouTube or other “fun” activity. Almost all students engaged in multiple activities (see Chart 1). They also came often: 24.4% came to the Library 4 or more times per week and 47% came 2-3 times per week. (The full report is on the Library website at www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/blog/in-library-use-survey-report-2013.)

Our users rate our services highly: Our first triennial survey (conducted November 18-23, 2010: the students who come to the Library come frequently, and they come because they like what they find here. (Other surveys, discussed in earlier issues of Classified Information, have shown that the student body as a whole thinks well of the Library).

To get meaningful information from this survey about how we could improve our “in-library” services, therefore, we turned to the last, open-ended question, “What can we do to make this library better for you?” Out of the 294 respondents, 124 took the time to write something (a total of 191 separate comments/complaints), and from the number of exclamation points and the length of the responses, it was obvious that the students cared and wanted to be heard (see Chart 2). When we coded the answers we found that the single largest source of complaint was the lack of Microsoft Office—21 students complained about that (11% of the comments)—followed by the need for more computers (19) and more outlets (18). [It’s striking (though not surprising in this era of mobile devices) that fully 9.42% of the comments were about outlets; one student said, “More access to electrical outlets, specially at desks. Why are they still located in walls? they should be conveniently placed on desks.”]. Comparing the 2013 comments with the 2010 comments, there were fewer complaints about noise and Library hours, but more complaints about outlets and computers, even though we had added both outlets and computers after the 2010 survey. Students also continued to ask for more space to study individually and in groups.

We were concerned to note that, in addition, there was an increase in the number of complaints about staff and about long lines, and we realized that our ratings on “customer service” had fallen slightly from 2010. We wondered if this change might be related to the establishment of community hour in 2012. To examine this more closely, we analyzed separately those surveys that had been filled out during community hour and found that, in fact, the students visiting during community hour rated the Library slightly lower on every single measure with quality of customer service dropping to seventh place from third among the community hour respondents.

So what did we do in response to what the students told us? We are increasing the staff at the Circulation and Reserve desks from 1–3pm; we have added Microsoft Office to 16 computers in the Reference area on the Library’s upper level; and we have put in a Student Technology Fee proposal for mobile charging stations to try to address the lack of electrical outlets. We cannot expand the walls of the Library, but we have made our space needs known to the College, and are converting stacks space to study space where possible. We continue to listen hard to the voices of our users.
Collections

Book Browsers
Marlene Kandel


In the words of Victoria Law, the editor, our recently acquired zine series is “a collection of articles, essays, poetry and art by formerly and currently incarcerated women across the United States. Their works cover subjects like the health care (or lack of health care) system, being HIV-positive inside prison, trying to get an education while in prison, sexual harassment by prison staff and general prison conditions, and giving up children for adoption—in the U.S., if a child is in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, the state automatically terminates the parent’s legal rights. Many women in prison have sentences far exceeding 15 months and the majority of them were single parents before entering prison” (Tenacious, 2009).

Law founded Tenacious in 2003 in response to a request from incarcerated women in Oregon who could find no outlet for their work. It is produced in print format only. As access to the internet is extremely limited within prisons, an “open access” publishing model would be of no benefit whatsoever to the majority of the zine’s incarcerated readers. Law handles distribution herself, mailing issues to women prisoners free of charge, and covering her costs by asking readers on the outside to pay $3 per issue.

*What’s a zine? It’s a DIY-style publication of original work, usually with a small circulation.*

Sources:

Tenacious: Art and writing from women in prison: An interview with Vikki Law from New York, United States. 2/13/2009. Available at grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/117

Notes from the Media Department

Maria Kiriakova

The Library maintains an impressive collection of video materials in the form of DVDs, VHS, and streaming video. We circulate materials mostly among John Jay College faculty and students but sometimes also lend them to other CUNY schools after making special arrangements. To ensure that a video will be available for your class, please make reservations in advance on our website under Faculty » More » Video Collection. Students are allowed to use the DVD/VHS collection in-library only. We have refurbished our media room on the ground floor of the Library and a small group of students (up to 8 people) can have a viewing there.

We welcome suggestions from the faculty for future purchases — the request form is on our website under Faculty » More » Video Collection. In the meantime, browse through the list of the latest video acquisitions. Descriptions are followed by the videos’ call numbers.

In American Drug War 2: Cannabis Destiny (DVD, 90 minutes) director Kevin Booth navigates through the cutting edge of cannabis research while becoming a foster parent to a child who is court ordered to take powerful, mind-altering drugs. This film uncovers the true profit motives that continue to keep marijuana inside the black market. DVD-1280

Based on the international bestseller, The Reluctant Fundamentalist is both a gripping thriller and a fascinating look at the post-9/11 world. An interview between an American journalist and a Pakistani professor forms the spine of Mira Nair’s sociopolitical character study. DVD-1262

Dirty Wars tells about the dirty little secret of the War on Terror: all bets are off, and almost anything goes. The rules of the game and of engagement have fundamentally changed. Today drone strikes, night raids, and U.S. government targeted killings occur in corners across the globe, killing untold numbers of civilians. Investigative reporter Jeremy Scahill traces the rise of the Joint Special Operations Command, the most secret fighting force in U.S. history. DVD-1264

When people think about World War II, wondering what it meant for the fate of museum-quality art is probably not the first thing that comes to mind. Yet as the documentary The Rape of Europa demonstrates, this is a surprisingly vast and involving topic. Written, produced and directed by Richard Berge, Bonni Cohen and Nicole Newnham and based on the authoritative book of the same title by Lynn H. Nicholas. DVD-1261

Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer. A twisted tale of murder, alleged police corruption and conniving opportunists that tracks the sensational trial and conviction of “America’s First Female Serial Killer.” DVD–1299 & VHS-995

Most Evil: The Serial Killer Matrix (3 disc). What drives someone to kill? Forensic psychiatrist Dr. Michael Stone explores the answer to this mystery and much more with his groundbreaking ‘index of depravity’ that decodes the killer’s mind, method, and motive. DVD-1295

Killers Among Us: Portraits in Evil: 4-Disc Box Set — 20-Part Series: America’s Serial Killers; Includes Columbine High School & Virginia Tech Massacre. DVD-1297

The Child Cases. Correspondent A.C. Thompson unearths more than 20 child death cases in which people were jailed on medical evidence that was later found unreliable. Are death investigators being properly trained for child cases? DVD-1306
The Suicide Tourist. Do we have the right to end our lives if life itself becomes unbearable, or are we terminally ill? With unique access to Dignitas, the Swiss non-profit that has helped over one thousand people die, filmmaker John Zaritsky offers a revealing look at two couples facing the most difficult decision of their lives. DVD-1304

Wikisecrets. Behind the leaking of more than half-a-million classified documents on the Wikileaks website stand two very different people: Julian Assange, the Internet activist and hacker who published the documents, and an Army intelligence analyst named Chelsea (Bradley) E. Manning. DVD-1305

Opium Brides and the Secret War. Award-winning Afghan journalist Najibullah Quraishi reports on the harrowing story of families torn apart and the collateral damage of the counter-narcotics effort in Afghanistan. DVD-1303

New York Street Games captures a special time in American history. From Boxball to Ring-o-leavio to Skully, the film addresses the social and cultural importance of these games and the sense of community they engendered. DVD-1302

Ken Burns: The Central Park Five tells the story of a horrific crime, the rush to judgment by the police, a media clamoring for sensational stories and an outraged public, and the five lives upended by this miscarriage of justice. DVD-1210

Biography: Ted Bundy. Who was he? How was his serial killer personality formed? And how did he keep his violent nature hidden? Interviews with prosecutors, detectives, psychiatrists, forensic scientists, and Bundy’s neighbors and classmates to seek answers. DVD-1300

Twilight: Los Angeles. On March 3, 1991, an African-American man was brutally beaten by four white Los Angeles police officers who stopped him for speeding. On April 29, 1992, when the jury’s “not guilty” verdict dismissed the officers on trial for the assault, the city ignited into three days of rioting, looting and violence that left neighborhoods smoldering. Twilight: Los Angeles, adapted from Anna Deavere Smith’s searing one-woman play, captures this tumultuous and challenging moment in America’s race relations. VHS-1858

Faculty favorites
Wherein faculty share a favorite book with the rest of us.

Comments solicited by Janice Dunham

Carmen Solis,
SEEK Department


Bonilla-Silva, a sociologist at Duke University, brings to light issues of color-blind ideologies and how those become ways to implement racist strategies. He helps one to see things like language context and story lines in color-blind dramas very differently. The analysis teaches one a lot.

The third edition is available on textbook reserve and in the library stacks: E184.A1 B597 2010

James Cauthen, Chair,
Political Science Department


Originally published in 1962, I first read this book on the history of science as a graduate student almost 20 years ago and I still think about it today. Its biggest impact on me was Kuhn’s view that scientific advancement is not incremental and linear, but rather through a series of revolutions. These revolutions come about after “puzzle-solving” within a dominant paradigm reveals weaknesses in the paradigm, leading to revolution and a new paradigm. Although Kuhn was a physicist who later focused on the history and philosophy of science, his work has application in the social sciences and beyond. Whenever you hear the phrase “paradigm shift,” you can thank Thomas Kuhn.

Available in the library stacks: Q175.K95 1970
New acquisitions in Special Collections

Ellen Sexton

We recently came across two beautifully illustrated works which came to us with the Helpern Library, a large collection of books that was de-acquisitioned by the NYC Health Department.

In the last decade of the 19th century, a successful industrialist, Elbert Hubbard, inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, founded a community of artisans in upstate New York, the Roycrofters. These woodworkers, artists, printers and bookbinders explored organic, naturalistic visions of the world. Hubbard’s 1915 account of a celebrity physical fitness promoter, *A little journey to the home of Jac Auer*, was one of a series of Little journeys published by their small print press. Hubbard himself died later that year in the sinking of the Lusitania. A digitized copy of a variant edition can be read on the HathiTrust site (search catalog.hathitrust.org). Our copy is printed on watermarked paper, bound in suede, illustrated with graphics in red and black inks, with black and white photographs.

On the other side of the Atlantic, after the Great War, Dr. Fritz Kahn was accompanying his popular science works with extraordinary machine-inspired biomedical illustrations. Best known perhaps is his 1926 poster of the human body as a chemical plant, *Der Mensch als Industriepalast (Man as Industrial Palace)*. While we do not have the good fortune of owning that wonderful item, we do now have some of his illustrations in a 1926 English translation of his popular science booklet, *The Cell*. Kahn originally published the booklet in Stuttgart in 1919, as part of the *Cosmos* series. The paper of our copy is quite brittle and can be handled only with great care. Happily the same illustrations can be seen risk-free in a digitized copy of the original German print on Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org).
Just arrived in the archives are the papers of retired NYPD Assistant Commissioner Philip McGuire. McGuire’s professional interests at the NYPD included the use of information systems for crime analysis. The collection has not yet been processed, but we believe his records are likely to provide a unique look at the development of computerized crime mapping. We hope to make the collection available to researchers this summer. Shown here is a 1970s dot-matrix print-out showing a crime map of the area around City College.

We have also acquired an early American edition of Beccaria’s *Essay on Crimes and Punishments*, published by R. Bell in Philadelphia in 1778, bound in its original sheepskin.

*Ellen Sexton is the Interim Special Collections Librarian.*
We are proud to announce the launch of the Lloyd Sealy Library Digital Collections. Our rich digitized resources are a boon to researchers, instructors, students, and the general public. From 1930s Sing Sing mug shots to photographs from NYPD history to exclusive oral history interviews with major figures in criminal justice, our digital collections are freely available to the public and include many public domain images. Presented here are highlights from each of the collections we feature online.

For more on the history and technical details of the project, see the site’s About page and “The Lloyd Sealy Library Digital Collections: A rich online resource coming soon” in Classified Information, Fall 2013.

Browse through the collections yourself! Head to http://dc.lib.jjay.cuny.edu

Justice in New York: An Oral History

Justice in New York stretches across more than half a century, from the 1950s to the 2010s. Those years saw an unprecedented rise in social unrest and violent crime in the city, and then an equally dramatic drop in crime and disorder. If the interviews have an overarching theme, it is how the city—the police, courts, elected officials, and advocates—addressed and overcame those challenges. These men and women were actors in that drama, and their narratives stand on their own. The truth or mendacity of the story is for the reader to assess.

Interviews online now are Robert Gangi, Harold Baer, Jr., Robert T. Johnson, John R. Dunne, John F. Timoney, William L. Murphy, Michael F. Armstrong, Patrick V. Murphy, Morton Silberman, and Ed Koch. Dozens more will be added in the future.

The oral history interviews were conducted by our very own Dr. Jeffrey Kroessler, Circulation Librarian and historian here at John Jay.
**Images from the NYPD Annual Reports, 1912–23**

The photographs and images in this collection are selected from the New York Police Department’s annual reports issued from 1912 to 1923. The full annual reports are held in Lloyd Sealy Library and have been fully digitized. They include crime statistics, events in the history of the NYPD, and descriptions of city policy.

**Lewis E. Lawes Papers**

The images are of items collected by Lewis E. Lawes while Warden of Sing Sing between 1920–1941. Most are photographs taken in and around Sing Sing and illustrate the prison, its inmates and officers, and Lawes himself. Included are photographs of death row inmates executed at Sing Sing, some dating from before 1920.

**John Jay College of Criminal Justice Archives**

The John Jay College Archives are part of the Special Collections of the Lloyd Sealy Library. The archives holds a wide variety of material such as correspondence, reports, studies, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, college yearbooks, bulletins, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, and architectural plans. Some of these materials are presented in this online collection. (We’ve had some students working in this collection this semester. See page 18 for one student’s perspective!)
You may have noticed LexisNexis’s new main page. Gone are the three content search boxes in the middle of the screen. They have been replaced by a single search box that retrieves results from news sources, federal and state cases, law reviews and company profiles. This single search will display up to 1000 results where applicable. The three content search boxes for news, legal cases and business information are now placed on the bottom of the page and are expandable (see the news search box expanded in the screenshot on the right). They perform quick searches for news articles and legal cases. The main page continues to feature links to articles on “Hot Topics” in the news. A new “Tools” menu is located on the left and features video tutorials, research guides and a list of content titles in LexisNexis.

**Advanced search**
You might be wondering where the advanced search form is now located. Underneath the single search bar you’ll find an advance search option that allows you to specify a date range, build a segment or field-specific search (e.g. “Headline” for news sources), specify a source, and select by content type.

**Content-specific searching**
For more advanced content-specific searches, click on the “Search By Content Type” option above the search box. Here you will find options for searching news, legal, international legal and other content. Click on one of these links and then select the advanced search option below the single search box for content specific search filters. Landmark cases by topic (e.g. abortion, capital punishment, and civil rights) are now listed under most links in the legal subsection of the Search By Content Type menu.

If you have any questions about the new LexisNexis interface, please contact the Library at lib.jjay.cuny.edu/ask-us.
Odd as it may sound, Business Source Complete can yield a bounty of useful information for student research. This is surprising, of course, since very few assignments focus on business specifically. But under the umbrella “business” we find management and administration, labor and personnel matters, crime and security, even intellectual property.

If a student is researching police suicide, for example, Business Source Complete yields hundreds of hits for the search terms “police” and “suicide” or “stress.” A search for “intellectual property” likewise brings up more articles than any undergraduate could use. We might expect both of those topics to be covered by this database, but what about a more sociological question? The favelas of urban Brazil offer a fertile field for research from a sociological or urban studies perspective, so it might seem a misstep to try Business Source Complete. But even here we get over 150 hits, and it would be worth investigating whether that set of articles differs from what comes up under SocIndex, for example (actually, Business Source has a few more hits than SocIndex).

When students embark on such a research quest, they must be encouraged to go where the sources take them, rather than mining the results for a specific answer. Toward that end, we should encourage them to venture beyond Academic Search Complete and JSTOR.

We should encourage students to venture beyond Academic Search Complete and JSTOR.

Insider theft is a particularly difficult problem for libraries and archives. Employees who passed background checks when hired might have concealed collecting obsessions or might develop a gambling or substance abuse habit. Once motivated to steal, they know their institution’s security system—and its loopholes. And it can take years, and hundreds of thousands of dollars of irrecoverable losses, before insider thieves are caught. Our speakers will discuss their experiences discovering and investigating insider thefts from governmental, university, and private libraries and archives. They will analyze the security measures that failed in these situations and describe subsequent policy and technological changes designed to prevent further insider theft within a limited security budget.

 Speakers

Larry Sullivan, Associate Dean and Chief Librarian, John Jay College and former Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress and former Library Director of the New-York Historical Society

Travis McDade, Curator of Law Rare Books and Associate Professor of Library Service, University of Illinois College of Law and author of Thieves of Book Row: New York’s Most Notorious Rare Book Ring and the Man Who Ended It

Jeanne Willoz-Egnor, Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science

Jennifer Comins, Archivist for the Carnegie Collections in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University

Admission
CUNY Students, Faculty, and Staff: Free
A.R.T. Members: $5.00
Non-Members: $10.00

RSVP
Register online at bit.ly/jitheft

Presented by the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (A.R.T).
Developed and co-sponsored by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s Department of Art & Music and Lloyd Sealy Library.
TRACfed

Your source for comprehensive information about federal law enforcement, staffing & spending

Maureen Richards

Many of the library databases provide access to scholarly journals, but the library also has many special purpose databases. TRACfed is one of them. TRACfed uses U.S. Federal Government data collected by TRAC (the “Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse”)—mostly pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)—to track how the government enforces the law, assigns its employees and spends money.

TRACfed uses this data to create reports (the TRACreports) and makes the data available to subscribers so they can create custom reports. Federal offices that are mined for data include:

- Federal Courts and Judges
- Drug Enforcement (DEA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)

Two recent reports—Federal Drug Prosecutions Fall to Lowest Levels in Over 13 Years and Criminal Deportation Filings Dip to 12%—provide some insight into the types of reports you might find in TRACfed.

If you are interested in learning about the “lead charges” under the U.S. Code assigned by federal prosecutors across the country, you can use the “About the law” tool. Just click on a section of the U.S. Code and find out how many prosecutions and convictions took place and what their geographic distribution was. Would it surprise you to learn that in 2013 there was a total of 71 prosecutions and 43 convictions under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and that most of those cases occurred in the eastern half of the United States?

For those more interested in accessing data to do their own analysis, TRACfed has three tools designed to meet a range of needs aptly called Express, Going Deeper and Analyzer. The data that can be accessed with these tools varies based on which of the 6 “layers” of information you are researching:

- Criminal (enforcement)
- Civil (enforcement)
- Administrative (enforcement)
- People (federal employees)
- Money (federal expenditures)
- Context (demographic and economic information about your community)

Using the Criminal layer as an example: if you want to know the monthly prosecution, conviction or prison sentences of one year or more, then the pull-down menu in the Express tool is the one for you. If you also want to know the lead charges, what agency brought them, and what prosecutions were declined, then use Going Deeper. If you want to create your own unique data slice on a topic or by a specific agency or statute, use Analyzer, but be sure to first take the Guided Tour to familiarize yourself with this powerful tool.

The design of TRACfed’s interface looks somewhat dated and cluttered, but once you get started it is surprisingly easy to navigate. It contains a massive amount of federal government data and provides robust tools to meet the needs of the beginning and expert researcher. The easiest way to access TRACfed, the product of a nonpartisan project associated with Syracuse University, is from the list of Databases by Title on the library’s homepage at www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu.

Example excerpt from a TRACfed report:
Prosecutions for 2013 — Referring Agency: Department of Defense

The latest available data from the Justice Department show that during FY 2013 the government reported 4,610 new prosecutions [referred by] the Department of Defense. According to the case-by-case information analyzed by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), this number is down 1.8% over the past fiscal year when the number of prosecutions totaled 4,694. ... Compared to five years ago when there were 4,775, the number of FY 2013 prosecutions of this type is down 3.5 percent. Prosecutions over the past year are still higher than they were ten years ago. Overall, the data show that prosecutions of this type are up 7.2 percent from the level of 4,301 reported in 2003 and up 57.6 percent from the level of 2,926 reported in 1993. ...

(Source: TRACfed)
Research

Not falling prey to predatory publishers

Strategies for steering away from predatory journals

Marta Bladek

In the past few years, a for-profit, scam-like publishing industry has emerged, exploiting the Open Access model in order to trick scholars into contributing their work. More than ever before, it is crucial that researchers establish and confirm the credentials of a journal and its publisher before they submit a paper for publication. The following suggestions on what to watch out for and how not to fall prey to these dishonest presses is culled from Prof. Monica Berger’s (NYC College of Technology) presentation “To Catch a Predator: How to Recognize Predatory Journals and Conferences” that took place at the Graduate Center on 11/26/13. Knowing what to look for should make it easier for you steer clear from submitting your work to journals that lack credibility.

How to recognize predatory journals

Solicitation and the publishing process typical of predatory journals

- mass mailings of unsolicited invitations to contribute to a journal (these spam-like invitations shouldn’t be confused with the emails received from the scholarly organizations you are a member of or with emails from the journal or publisher where your past work appeared)
- a strikingly quick turnaround from submission to publication
- peer review process not explained and conducted in no time
- no revisions required

Typical journal and publisher presentation

- the title resembles the title of a well-known publication
- the title suggests an overly broad or extremely vague scope (e.g., Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, British Journal of Science)
- although the title specifies location (European Journal...) the journal is located in another part of the world
- the publisher’s website include typos and grammatical errors; contradictory details about editorial policies, fees, etc.; dead links and no information about the publisher’s physical address; a look and interface that mimics the design of a well-known publisher

Editors

- the publisher is also the editor
- the email address is a popular one (Gmail or Yahoo) or not listed at all (web form only)
- no information about editorial or advisory boards
- a large number of published titles (especially for new presses)

To learn more about predatory publishers, you should consult the blog maintained by Jeffrey Beall, the Scholarly Initiatives Librarian at the University of Colorado Denver at scholarlyoa.com. Beall maintains and regularly updates a list of predatory open access journals to stay away from. He has also put together a list of criteria for determining whether a journal is predatory (his list is more exhaustive than the abbreviated one above).
Last November, I was approached by Prof. Gerald Markowitz to work on a research project for John Jay’s upcoming 50th anniversary. Prof. Markowitz, along with a few others, was asked to head a committee to create a timeline exhibit for the College. I gladly accepted the offer to join them, recognizing that the experience would greatly increase my own research skills.

As I began to attend the exhibit meetings, I quickly learned the scope of my work. I would look through books of newspaper clippings located in the Special Collections room, compiling a list of events at the college: plays, sports, funding received, grants, guest speakers, etc. Thankfully, two more student researchers were brought on to help me with what seemed at times a Sisyphean task.

Over the months of January, February, and March, I became intimately acquainted with the Special Collections room, the Library Conference room, John Jay’s newspaper clippings, and its archival photographs in ways I could have never imagined. When I closed my eyes, everything was sepia. At certain times of the day, I smelled aging newspaper, and if I listened carefully, I could hear the crinkle of paper and the flipping of binder pages. I cursed when the Library was only open till 10pm on weekdays.

Levity aside, I found the research fascinating. While I enjoyed learning about the big events of John Jay, including CUNY’s financial crisis in 1976 and the student takeovers in 1989 in response to rising tuition costs, what I found most compelling were the small stories. Over the course of my research, certain names would begin to reappear every now and again: a notable basketball player, a professor, or a student who won a scholarship. Often surfacing only in small blurbs with a few sentences, these stories often did much to humanize the history of the College. Seeing these small narratives unfold literally before my eyes made me cognizant of my own place at John Jay and how short my time at the school is, as just one of thousands of other current and former students. I felt the same way when looking at the photographs of John Jay’s history. Photos of student and campus life were just as interesting as Mother Teresa or Bill Cosby at the college.

I also can't forget to thank the fantastic Library staff for all the help they have provided me. From Prof. Ellen Sexton to Robin Davis, who both directly helped me manage the materials, to every single other librarian I may have at one point or another asked (hopefully kindly) to open some door for me. It made my work that much easier and more enjoyable.

It’s a good thing that I did this research when John Jay was only 50, as I am not sure I envy the researcher who, in another 50 years, will have to face an even more daunting task. Maybe—with any luck—he will find some mention of me in the records.

Editor’s note: in addition to their incredible work on the 50th Anniversary Exhibit, Jakub and his classmates, Kayla Talbot and Brittany Cabanas, have made invaluable contributions to the John Jay College Archives in the Digital Collections by scanning archival items, researching photograph subjects, and creating metadata. See their work online at dc.lib.jjay.cuny.edu! —Robin Davis
Anonymous apps
Swing of the pendulum?
Janice Dunham

Two new, free and popular smartphone apps are anonymous. There are no accounts, no profiles, no contact lists, no names attached to posts, and few archives. Is the pendulum swinging away from “social media performance” and the “ultra-curated reputations” of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn? Perhaps NSA revelations have made youth wary? Perhaps the teen and young college-age demographic is intrigued with the mystery of a changing persona? A place to let off steam? A friend in need? Or maybe it’s the confessional again.

Secret, an app on iOS, was introduced in February 2014 by Silicon Valley engineers who wanted a place to share what they could not say face to face and without judgment: “join Secret and speak freely.” When you sign up for Secret, it links to anyone in your contact list who uses Secret, but you never know who is posting unless they choose to reveal themselves. Posts are short bursts of text, for example, “Going through a merger is like going through a double date....” In its short life, Secret has been the source of some untrue business rumors and some personal attacks, so this is not a benign site.

Whisper, for iOS and Android, was introduced two years ago, but took off late in 2013. It has more than three billion page views a month—more than CNN’s. A post to Whisper, for instance, says “Nobody at work knows I’m a lesbian,” and then chooses a stock photo to display the thought. On each display you see a button that encourages you to post. Whisper notifies you of posts created by people within a radius of a mile and more. Each day six posts are chosen by the site curators to feature. Founder Michael Heyward says, “There is no safer place,” and 120 real-time curators mean to keep it so.

These two anonymous apps create different network structures from those we are most used to. Whisper seems to be more novel, a departure from previous trash-talking anonymous sites and a distance from incessant “Like me.”

Interlibrary loan (ILL) services are available to John Jay College faculty (and their authorized John Jay research assistants), graduate students and undergraduate students (article requests only) for academic research purposes. Book articles, book chapters, dissertations and media items that John Jay does not own and that cannot be requested through CLICS or through the media department can be ordered via ILL. See our website for instructions and more information.
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