This paper describes the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), discusses the Reading and Communication Skills Clearinghouse and its role in the ERIC system, and shows journalism teachers and advisors at the high school level how to use the ERIC system. An introduction containing an overview of ERIC is followed by a description of the tools and methods necessary for using the system effectively. The narrative is interspersed with diagrams and figures, which further explain the system and how to use it. The article concludes with a sample search of the ERIC system showing a typical search strategy a journalism teacher would follow.
A Resource for Journalism Teachers: ERIC

by Rodney J. Barth
ERIC/RCS Staff

Booklet Price:
Publications program free
JEA members 75 cents
Non-members $2

Publications Program
A RESOURCE FOR JOURNALISM TEACHERS: ERIC

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The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system consisting of 16 clearinghouses under the general sponsorship of the National Institute of Education (NIE). Each clearinghouse is responsible for selecting, analyzing, evaluating, and disseminating educational information and materials in a given area. For example, the Reading and Communication Skills Clearinghouse (ERIC/RCS) is responsible for research, resource, and instructional materials in journalism, reading, English, speech and theater, i.e., the communication skills. The data collected in journalism by ERIC/RCS are available to journalism teachers and advisors in more than 500 ERIC microfiche collections located across the country.

In the area of scholastic journalism, the ERIC system contains information and resources on teaching journalism, advising the school newspaper and yearbook, organizing the journalism staff, preparing editorial guidelines and policies, and instructing students in news-gathering and editing. ERIC contains additional information on the legal aspects of journalism, recent court decisions related to scholastic journalism, freedom of speech, the First Amendment rights of students and teachers, and censorship problems.

Two books recently indexed into the system by the ERIC/RCS Clearinghouse are Captive Voices—The Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into High School Journalism by Jack Nelson and Student Press Rights by Robert Trager. The first of these, prompted by the Kennedy Commission, was published by Schocken Books; the second was published by the Journalism Education Association in cooperation with ERIC/RCS. Other materials in the ERIC system include transcripts of speeches, papers on teaching methods, research reports, conference and convention proceedings, literature review, inservice and preservice workshop information, curriculum guides and journal articles.

In order to use the ERIC system to best advantage, each teacher needs a working concept on how to retrieve information. It does not take the skills of a librarian to acquire valuable information from the ERIC system, although a brief explanation from a librarian may be in order for the beginner. The effective user of ERIC will need to be familiar with the tools of the ERIC system. These tools include the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors, Resources in Education, and Current Index to Journals in Education.

THE TOOLS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM

The Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors is the key to the entire system. This thesaurus, which is continuously updated to maintain accuracy, is the source of all subject terms (descriptors) used for indexing and for retrieval of documents and journal articles in the ERIC collection. (See Figure 1.)
Each item entered in the ERIC system is assigned several descriptors selected from the Thesaurus that reflect the essential subject matter contained in the document. Descriptors marked by an asterisk (*) indicate the major concepts of the document, while the unmarked descriptors denote concepts of only minor emphasis in the document. In cases where no descriptor adequately describes some important feature of a document, an 'identifier' may be assigned in addition to the descriptors. When an identifier is used frequently, as was the case with 'News Reporting', a clearinghouse (in this case ERIC/RC) submits it as a new descriptor for inclusion in the Thesaurus as part of the updating process mentioned earlier. Examples of descriptors journalism teachers and advisors will find useful include: 'Student Publications,' 'School Newspapers,' 'Journalism,' 'Headlines,' 'News Reporting,' 'Student Rights,' 'Yearbook,' 'Freedom of Speech,' 'Court Litigation,' and 'Censorship.' 'First Amendment' can be found as an identifier. Other journalism related descriptors may be located by consulting the Thesaurus.

The abstracts of documents thus indexed are printed in Resources in Education (RIE) which is published each month. About 1,000 documents from the 16 ERIC Clearinghouses are indexed and summarized in each monthly

Figure 2 Subject Index from RIE

Censorship

S N News Reporting
RT Technology
Courses
Editing
French Literature
Language Arts
Layout (publications)
Mass Media
Occupations
Publications
Radio
Spanish American Literature
Spanish Literature
Television
Writing

School Newspapers
BF Newspapers
School Publications
RT Class Newspapers
Curricular Activities
Schools

An Analysis of the Editorial Content and Policy of Twenty Selected High School Newspapers in Pennsylvania.

ED 082 232

The College and University Campus Student Press: An Examination of Its Status and Aspirations and Some of the Myths Surrounding It.

ED 084 963

The High School Underground Press: Content Analysis, Member Attitudes and Beliefs.

ED 083 640


ED 085 704
volume. Each RIF also contains a main entry section and a subject index, an author index, and a source index (institution or publisher). The subject index is arranged alphabetically by descriptors. Documents which have been assigned a particular term as a major descriptor are listed in the subject index under that term. (See Figures 2 and 3.) Thus, a document which has been assigned five major descriptors will be found in two places in the subject index. In each place, the title and a six-digit EJ (for RIF Document) accession number are listed. Semianual and annual compilations of RIF are also available. Before January 1975, RIF represented Resources in Education. But the title was changed to Resources in Education in order to more accurately reflect its contents. The organization and contents remained unchanged.

Most documents abstracted in RIF are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) in two forms: microfiche (MF), a four-by-six inch microfilm card containing up to 96 pages of text; or hard copy (HC), six-by-eight inch black and white photographically reproduced pages in a paper binding. A few documents listed in RIF are not available from EDRS. In these cases, ordering information and current price are listed with the abstract in the main entry section.

Articles from nearly 600 educational journals are indexed in the same manner in another ERIC publication, Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). (See Figure 4.) These articles are assigned a six-digit EJ (for Educational Journal) accession number and are often annotated. Semianual and annual compilations of CIJE are available. Copies of the journal articles indexed in CIJE are not available from RIF, they must be obtained from a library collection or from the publisher.

SEARCHING ERIC: A CASE STUDY

A hypothetical case study on censorship which incorporates the previously introduced tools, terms, and diagrams in a search of the ERIC system follows.

John Smith has accepted a position teaching high school journalism with the stipulation that he serve as faculty advisor to the school newspaper. The student editor has approached Mr. Smith with the suggestion that the newspaper run a series of articles on drug use and abuse in the community. Smith, concerned with community reaction and administrative policy toward controversial issues, needs more information on censorship and journalistic responsibility in high school newspapers before he considers the editor's proposal. Smith has heard about the ERIC system and plans to spend some time investigating it with the hope of uncovering some information that will help him establish guidelines for the newspaper's editorial policy.

Smith's first step is to phrase, as narrowly and accurately as possible, the question he seeks to answer. "What news is fit (and allowable) to print in the high school press?" Smith will be looking for information on censorship policies in the high school press, on responsible journalism, and on freedom of speech.

The next task is for Smith to determine the descriptors he will use to conduct his search. He goes to the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors...
and first looks under the term 'Journalism.' He finds a list of terms under 'Journalism' which are divided into several categories under the notations B1, N1, and R1, which indicate those terms that are narrower than (N1), broader than (B1), or related to (R1) the term 'Journalism.' Each of the terms listed under these abbreviations is itself a descriptor. This cross-listing enables a searcher to quickly identify other possible descriptors that might be useful in a search.

In this case Smith picks 'Writing' and 'Publications' from the related term list as terms he feels are applicable to his search. Although Smith does not find any useful descriptors listed under 'Writing' in the Thesaurus, under 'Publications' he finds 'School Publications.' Listed as an NT under 'School Publications' is the term 'School Newspapers.' Smith also discovers that the term 'Censorship' is listed in the Thesaurus. Since Smith feels he has found the appropriate descriptors ('School Newspapers' and 'Censorship'), he looks under these terms in the Subject Index of the latest cumulative index of RIF.

From the titles of the documents listed in the Subject Index, Smith determines whether or not he is interested in reading the abstracts. If he is, he turns to the Document Resumes section of RIF. By reading each of the abstracts, he can decide which ERIC documents he is interested in reading in their entirety. Smith can then read those documents available on microfiche on the microfiche reader in his library. If he wishes, he can order either microfiche or paper copy reproductions using ordering instructions available in each issue of RIF. By careful reading, in RIF, the abstracts of those documents not available on microfiche Smith can determine if he would like to purchase copies of the documents. He records the ordering information included with the abstracts of those documents he wants to order.

Smith can also obtain a list of references from educational journals relevant to his topic by using the same descriptors for searching the Current Index to Journals in English (CIJE). CIJE entries include brief annotations whenever an article's title is not indicative of its content. However, in order to read the entire article, Smith must either obtain it from the library or order it from the journal publisher.

By now, Smith has obtained a significant body of information on the subject in which he is interested. He may continue to pursue information or decide that what he has found is sufficient to enable him to draw up guidelines for determining responsibility of the school newspaper to print articles such as the series on drugs.

OTHER RESOURCES

Low-cost computer searches of the ERIC system are available throughout the country from both public and private search services, and Smith could have used one of these services had he so desired.

Listed below are the location of the computer search services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERIC/Career Education</th>
<th>204 Gabel Hall</th>
<th>Northern Illinois University</th>
<th>DeKalb, IL 60115 Phone: 815-753-1251</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERIC/Counseling &amp; Personnel</td>
<td>2108 Education Bldg.</td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
<td>Ann Arbor, MI 48104 Phone: 313-764-9492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC/Disadvantaged Box 40</td>
<td>Columbia University Teachers College</td>
<td>525 W. 120th St. New York, NY 10027 Phone: 212-678-3438</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC/Early Childhood Development</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>George Washington University</td>
<td>One Dupont Circle, Suite 630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USING THE ERIC SYSTEM

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills is sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. ERIC's objective is to keep educators informed about current developments in education. Information collected by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the other ERIC clearinghouses can be ordered from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P.O. Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210. For complete ordering information consult the monthly issues of Resources in Education (RIE).

Documents with ED numbers are indexed in Resources in Education. Those with EJ numbers are indexed in Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). And those with CS numbers are recently acquired materials; ED or EJ numbers will soon be assigned.

To find out the ERIC computer search service nearest to you, you may write ERIC/RCS at 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801.

Sample prices for materials from the ERIC document service are 75 cents for microfiche of a document running between 1 and 479 pages. For hard copy, the price runs $1.50 for 1-25 pages, $5.40 for 101-125 pages. Postage is added to these prices.