North American Idioms: An Interactive English Language Learning Resource

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instructions, help, or guidance. The quality of the images is good overall, but the set lacks any efficient structure and does not approach any minimal search and use standards that we have come to expect from electronic products.

There is no homepage to lay out the scope of the product. Help does not exist, the searching capability is minimal, navigation is clumsy, and the overall effect is frustration. The set is used via a browser, but to manipulate the images you need to do the Start-Run routine in Windows. Most of the text included on the discs describes the structure of the printed product (e.g., the image descriptions are listed by chapter).

The Bottom Line: The result of an individual's interest in a fascinating topic, this suffers from its unprofessional production. The Mills-Kronburg Collection of Danish Village Wall Church Paintings, 1100-1600 is useful only in the most exhaustive art collections. Not recommended.—Ed Tallent, O'Neill Lib., Boston Coll.

NORTH AMERICAN IDIOMS: AN INTERACTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING RESOURCE
Encomium Pubns. (800-234-4831; info@encomium.com).
www.encomium.com
Windows 95/98/PowerMac 7.5+. 2001.
Price: $79.95

Try saying, "That exam was a piece of cake," to someone learning English and watch the look of confusion that comes from taking you literally. Fortunately for students of English—and their teachers—a CD-ROM product is now available to unlock the mysteries of the bizarre idioms we use. North American Idioms: An Interactive English Language Learning Resource is true to its name—it is a fantastic interactive learning tool that is as engaging as it is instructional.

Learning idioms can be frustrating in any language, and in English it is especially challenging, but this program makes it fun. Intermediate-level language learners are introduced to a variety of idioms in the context of real-life situations. There are 16 units here covering 12 idioms each. In "Planning for Greece," the idioms include common expressions like "going out on the town," "having a ball," or "playing it by ear." Click on one of the expressions and get a written definition and at least two examples of usage. Then click on an audio icon next to each written explanation and example and hear the words read aloud. The real fun begins when you click the video icon on the tool bar at the bottom of the screen. A full conversation is enacted using all the expressions presented in the lesson. Although none of the actors will be winning awards for their performances, they do pronounce words clearly and slowly enough for a student to follow easily.

While the content only "scratches the surface" (Idioms, Unit 3) by presenting 192 idiomatic English expressions, the producers have focused on the common expressions English speakers use all the time, such as "in any case," "by the way," and "as a matter of fact." The interactive activities sections that go along with each unit review the lessons in a variety of learning styles, such as using matching games and choosing the best response in a conversation. Review questions reinforce each idiom through different styles of reiteration that is varied, not redundant. One suggestion I have for improving the activities section is by not making users click the "next" button after every question, they should automatically progress after each question is answered.

The Bottom Line: North American Idioms: An Interactive English Language Learning Resource is a product that is entertaining and intuitive to use. The target audience may be younger students of English, but it will be tremendously helpful to adult learners as well. Highly recommended for public libraries, libraries supporting ESL programs, and individuals learning English as a second language.—Elizabeth McKelvie, Access Syvcs., Widener Lib., Harvard Univ.

WEB PSYCHOLOGY & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES COLLECTION
EBSCO Pub. (800-655-3375, ep@epnet.com).
www.epnet.com
Date reviewed: 3/13/01
Price: Negotiated by site.

EBSCO's Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection is a subject database with full-text articles. The collection includes 350 peer-reviewed journals as well as about 30 popular magazines. The earliest articles are from 1984, and most titles actually do stretch that far back. Some titles have a 12-month full-text embargo so that articles published within the last year only have the citation and abstract included. When available, links to places where the full text of embargoed articles are located online are provided.

The interface is clear, easy to use, and offers several different search options. The default search is by keyword; Boolean operators can be employed. Other search options include natural language, advanced, and expert. Advanced search offers multiple input boxes with Boolean connectors available in dropdown menus. In advanced searching, users can also specify which fields to search. Expert searching allows the use of extra limiters (type of document, number of pages, whether or not the article is a cover story) and saves those searches for further manipulation.

Natural Language Search ignores Boolean connectors; it simply retrieves all articles where any of the search terms are found and then returns the results in a relevance ranking. I found this the least useful as it always brought 250 articles, regardless of the terms I added or omitted. A search for "articles on children's dreams" returned the same number of articles as simply entering "children." Advanced search and Keyword search both produced more accurate results. Expert search also returned good results, and the ability to save searches can be very helpful here. Unfortunately, searches executed in Keyword or Advanced search are not automatically saved for manipulation in Expert search. Searches need to start in Expert mode if they plan to combine searches later.

The electronic implementation of this database is really superb. Colors and screen layout are eye-catching and attractive, yet not at all distracting. Icons and buttons are large and clearly labeled. In addition to the literature database, the collection includes a database of images. A source list for the journals is included, which gives each title's publisher name and address, years of inclusion in the database, and any full-text embargo that exists. The system searches quickly, although in places where full-text articles are not immediately available, the links to sites outside of the collection can be somewhat slow in opening.

The Bottom Line: Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection is a sure bet for libraries with users researching psychology and related disciplines. It does not have PsycInfo's depth of coverage, but the predominance of full-text articles will assuage its popularity with—and use by—patrons. The clear interface and multiple search techniques will make it equally popular with librarians. Highly recommended for academic and medium to large public libraries.—Suzanne Wones, Kennedy Sch. of Government Lib., Harvard Univ.