



# Information Resources in HRD

Want to find out more about your profession? Here are some invaluable sources.

By L. JAMES OLIVETTI

**T**raining professionals need to make efficient use of two kinds of knowledge about the training field. As Ian Mitroff points out in his chapter in the book *Doing Research That Is Useful for Theory and Practice*, edited by Edward Lawler III, trainers need to be grounded

in "academic" knowledge and keep abreast of new findings generated by academic research. They also need to be aware of, and make use of, "street" knowledge generated within their day-to-day world of work.

My primary purpose here is to describe resources that trainers can use to tap into both academic and street knowledge about training. I won't be addressing the subject matter trainers teach, such as safety, welding, or customer relations.

Sources of information and information access methods are always in flux. This change is fueled, in part, by the power of computers to store, manipulate, and disseminate information. The resources and strategies presented here have achieved some stability and longevity, but new technological developments and new resources appear at an alarming rate. Trainers need to be alert to developments that will supersede information I present below.

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## Sources of academic knowledge

Several academic disciplines contribute to formal theory and research in training. Pace, Peterson, and Porter point out in their article in the March 1986 issue of the *Training & Development Journal* that a variety of university departments offer coursework in training including behavioral sciences, communications, instructional media, education, adult education, vocational education, business, and counseling. This diversity is important in that a resource for academic knowledge may be oriented toward only one discipline's viewpoint or approach.

## Overview sources

For trainers not well versed in the academic knowledge base of a particular topic, a good place to begin is a handbook. Handbooks provide an overview of major theoretical issues and point out key research studies. Examples of some overview sources for training include *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *Training and Development Handbook*, *Human Resources Management and Development Handbook*, *Handbook of Human Resource Development*, and *Annual Review of Psychology*.

## Books

Books provide a source of detailed information on a topic and often synthesize and interpret a large body of academic research. Two bibliographies that provide excellent listings of landmark books in training are the Ontario Society for Training and Development's *Weighted Bibliography: Learning Resources for T&D/HRD Practitioners* and the University of Minnesota's *Human Resource Development Bibliography*. A monthly printed bibliography of books, as well as government documents and journal articles, that is both relevant and inexpensive is *Personnel Literature*.

Trainers who have an ongoing need for books but don't have large budgets for book purchase should consider building a relationship with a nearby university library. Some university libraries offer corporate borrowing privileges, allowing trainers many services normally reserved for students and faculty.

Most university libraries use the Library of Congress subject headings to provide subject access to the library's book collection through a card catalog or computerized catalog. Trainers will find the bulk of the library's training collection listed under

Training and Development Journal, January 1988

Figure 1—U.S. HRD Journals

<i>Academy of Management Journal</i> , Academy of Management
<i>Adult Education Quarterly</i> , American Association for Adult and Continuing Education
<i>California Management Review</i> , University of California, Graduate School of Business Administration
<i>Education Communication &amp; Technology Journal</i> (ECTJ), Association for Educational Communications & Technology
<i>Group and Organization Studies</i> , Sage Publications
<i>Harvard Business Review</i> , Harvard University, Graduate School of Business Administration
<i>Human Resource Management</i> , John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , American Psychological Association
<i>Journal of Industrial Teacher Education</i> , National Association of Industrial & Technical Teacher Educators
<i>Performance &amp; Instruction</i> , National Society for Performance and Instruction
<i>Personnel Psychology</i> , Personnel Psychology, Inc.
<i>Public Personnel Management</i> , International Personnel Management Association

the following Library of Congress subject headings:

- Apprentices
- Assessment centers
- Business education (Internship)
- Employee induction
- Employee training directors
- Employees, Training of
- Executives, Training of
- International business enterprises—Employees, Training of
- Occupational retraining
- Sales personnel, Training of
- Technical education
- Training manuals

## Academic journals

Trainers seeking the most up-to-date academic knowledge in their field must look beyond overview sources and books and consult academic journals. The typical academic journal article focuses on a single research study or synthesizes a group of such studies on a discrete topic. Journal articles reporting the results of academic research often have a standardized format that includes:

- brief literature review;

- research hypothesis;
- experimental design;
- results;
- summary and conclusions.

This format allows for easy initial scanning of the articles.

A sample of the U.S. journals that regularly publish academic knowledge relevant to trainers is listed in Figure 1. Keep in mind, however, that new journals are introduced and existing journals change their names or cease publication on a continuing basis. To thoroughly search the literature trainers must use computerized databases or printed indexes and abstracts, described in a later section.

## Sources of street knowledge

Street knowledge is less defined and less controlled than academic knowledge. It is knowledge that is gathered informally by word of mouth on a trainer-to-trainer basis. We could say that a trainer's entire work-related environment serves as a source of street knowledge.

Trainers can take certain steps to fine tune the channels by which they are

Figure 2—Major U.S. training associations

**American Association for Adult and Continuing Education**

1201 16th St., NW,  
Suite 230  
Washington, DC 20036  
202/822-7866

**American Society for Personnel Administration**

606 N. Washington St.  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703/548-3440

**American Society for Training and Development**

1630 Duke St.  
Box 1443  
Alexandria, VA 22313  
703/683-8100

**Association for the Development of Computer-Based Instructional Systems**

Miller Hall 409  
Western Washington University  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
206/676-2860

**Association for Educational Communications and Technology**

1126 16th St., NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
202/466-4780

**Human Resource Planning Society**

P.O. Box 2553  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163  
212/490-6387

**International Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research**

1414 22nd St., NW,  
Suite 102  
Washington, DC 20037  
202/296-4710

**National Society for Performance and Instruction**

1126 16th St., NW,  
Suite 214  
Washington, DC 20036  
202/861-0777

**National Society of Sales Training Executives**

1040 Woodcock Road  
Orlando, FL 32803  
305/894-8312

**OD Network**

P.O. Box 69329  
Portland, OR 97201  
503/246-0148

**Society for Applied Learning Technology**

50 Culpepper St.  
Warrenton, VA 22186  
703/347-0055

receiving street knowledge. I describe below resources and strategies for achieving this fine tuning.

**Professional associations**

Being an active member of at least one professional association is probably the single most important thing a trainer can do to tie into sources of street knowledge. Some examples of practitioner-oriented resources professional associations typically provide are demographic and salary surveys, newsletters on national issues, employment opportunity announcements, professional standards, specialized libraries or information centers, and professional development opportunities in the form of workshops and conferences.

■ **Networking.** A source of practitioner-based knowledge that professional associations uniquely offer is the availability of networking among members. In his article in the third 1981 issue of *Issues and Observations*, J. Ferguson lists four kinds of benefits effective networks provide to participants: insider information on latest developments; expert opinion and advice; morale support and alliance building; and access to still other networks.

Some associations formally structure such networks for their members; in others, members must generate their own networks. An example of a formal network is the American Society for Training and Development's (ASTD) Member Information Exchange (MIX). Administered by ASTD's Information Center, this network is an in-house database of members' expertise profiles that can be tapped by other members seeking information on specific training topics. "Experts" in the database have volunteered to assist their peers by sharing their practical expertise and knowledge.

Informal networking can take place during national conferences, committee meetings, or simply through creative use of an association's membership directory.

■ **Mailing lists.** A sometimes overlooked, and occasionally maligned, benefit of association membership is the opportunity to be included on professional mailing lists that are made available to vendors of training-related products and services. Some trainers feel that unsolicited promotional material in their mail is burdensome. But regularly scanning direct mail announcements can provide practitioners with a valuable current awareness resource.

■ **Major associations.** While ASTD is the major U.S. association for training professionals, a number of other organizations have special interest groups for trainers, or

at least a substantial number of members who are in the training field. There are also a growing number of associations that focus on a single aspect of training. Trade associations of many industries, such as health, construction, or transportation, also are good resources for highly focused training information. Figure 2 lists major U.S. training-related associations.

## Seminars

Seminars can vary in content from very theoretical to very applied. Their overall goal is not to produce scholars, but rather to bring attendees up to speed in a new field in a concentrated period of time. They may originate as offshoots of university curricula but are also sponsored by associations, businesses, government agencies, or private consultants. A side benefit of seminar attendance that trainers shouldn't overlook is the opportunity to share mutual experiences with like-minded participants.

The large number and diversity of seminars available presents practitioners with a significant selection problem. Various print and computerized services exist to assist trainers in identifying seminars for themselves or employees in their firms. Some of the best known services are:

- *SIS Workbook*—an annual directory with supplements providing seminar descriptions listed by subject with sponsors and dates.

- *Seminars Directory*—a semiannual publication that lists seminars with descriptions under 150 subject areas.

- *Seminar Clearinghouse International (SCI)*—a telephone referral service that provides descriptions of seminars and evaluations provided by SCI subscribers. A computerized database of SCI's information is also available. The clearinghouse is located in St. Paul, Minnesota.

- *TRAINET Seminar Database*—a computerized database of 100,000 public seminars that is accessible over personal computer or terminal. The database is produced for ASTD National members by Timeplace, Inc., Waltham, Massachusetts.

## Professional conferences and trade shows

The professional associations listed in Figure 2 all hold annual conferences for their memberships, but nonmembers are welcome. These conferences typically have concurrent sessions with papers delivered on a range of topics. One-day workshops often are held before or after the conference as well. Conference

presentations are an excellent source of the most current knowledge—knowledge that may take a year or more to reach publication in a journal or book.

Beyond learning from these formal presentations, trainers can gain much practical knowledge from visiting product exhibitions, socializing with peers at conference receptions, and rubbing elbows with training "gurus" who are often keynote speakers or association officers.

Several training-related enterprises have evolved annual events similar to association conferences, such as

- the *Training Annual Conference*, sponsored by Lakewood Publications, Inc.;

- the U.A. Annual Conference, organized by University Associates, Inc.;

- COMMTEX, the annual conference of the International Communications Industries Association;

- the Computer-Based Training Conference, sponsored by Weingarten Publications, Inc.

## Practitioner journals

A number of training-related journals are oriented toward publishing street knowledge rather than solely research reports. The typical article in such a journal is written by a practitioner and describes how trainers can address a practical problem in an actual training setting. Other articles provide how-to advice, checklists of steps to follow in conducting a training activity,

and news of products and events in the field.

Aside from the articles, trainers can pick up additional useful street knowledge from advertisements, book and media reviews, letters and editorials, and events calendars. Figure 3 lists major U.S. practitioner journals.

## Performance aids

A wide variety of printed performance aids are available that trainers can turn to for practical advice and assistance on the job. The following list of such aids is a sample of the kinds available; it is not comprehensive. Prices aren't included, as they would soon be out of date.

- *ASTD Buyer's Guide and Consultant Directory*, published by ASTD, and *Training Marketplace Directory*, published by Lakewood Publications. These are two annual directories of products and services available to training practitioners. Both are organized by topic and contain full producer contact information.

- *Trainer's Resource*, published by HRD Press. A regularly updated guide to several hundred commercially produced learning programs deliverable at a company's site. Program prices and recent program users are provided.

- *Annual: Developing Human Resources*, published by University Associates. An annual handbook of practical materials such as lectures, instrumentation, and structured experiences for use in training, career development, and organization development functions. Trainers can reproduce the materials from the volumes for educational training events.

- *Info-Line*, published by ASTD. A monthly booklet series with each issue devoted to a single topic related to training delivery. The booklets contain job aids, checklists, guidelines, and extensive resource lists.

- *HRD Review*, published by G.F. Khoury. A monthly looseleaf publication providing reviews of new books, videocassettes, games and simulations, packaged programs, and the like. Practicing trainers write evaluative reviews.

- *ASTD Training Video Directory*, published by ASTD. A two-volume directory of over 12,000 training-related video programs. Indexed by subject, each program entry includes information on date, producer-distributor, target audience, length, and a brief program description.

- *Media Profiles: The Career Development Edition*, published by Olympic Media Information. A bimonthly guide to training film and video programs. Training profes-

**Figure 3—Major U.S. practitioner journals**

*Bulletin on Training*, Bureau of National Affairs, Inc.  
*Data Training*, Weingarten Publications, Inc.  
*OD Practitioner*, OD Network  
*Personnel*, American Management Association  
*Personnel Administrator*, American Society for Personnel Administration  
*Sales and Marketing Training*, National Society of Sales Training Executives  
*Training*, Lakewood Publications, Inc.  
*Training & Development Journal*, American Society for Training and Development  
*Training News*, Weingarten Publications, Inc.

sionals prepare reviews that include target audience, content summary, and brief evaluation. The guide profiles approximately 150 current programs each year.

■ *Training and Development Organization Directory*, published by Gale Research. An irregularly revised directory of approximately 2,000 firms, institutes, specialized university programs, and other agencies that offer training and development programs. The work is organized geographically with a detailed subject index.

■ *Hope Reports U.S. Training Business*, published by Hope Reports, Inc.. A market study report of the commercial training business with data about suppliers of off-the-shelf training programs, custom design services, and generic seminars. Includes commercial training revenues by year since 1977, region, subject matter, client industry, media, and the like.

■ *Trainer's Workshop*, published by the American Management Association. A monthly publication that features an in-depth training module in each issue. Modules include role plays, lecturettes, pretests and posttests, and workpapers.

## Computer databases

The conscientious trainer who wants to use published academic and street knowledge available to improve the quality of his or her training programs is faced with the formidable task of harnessing the wealth of published material that is growing along with the general information explosion in our society. Fortunately, the 1970s and 1980s have witnessed successful application of computers to the control of this literature.

## The search process

Computerized searching of databases for literature provides a number of advantages over precomputerized manual searching of printed abstracts and indexes. Among the major advantages are

- speed of machine searching of files containing several hundred thousand references;
- currency of information on-line, not requiring lag time for printing and mailing of a printed source;
- flexibility of combining several concepts in a single search;
- automated output of a sorted bibliography in print or machine-readable format.

In a typical computerized database search, a searcher at a terminal or micro-computer with a modem types out a search query statement such as, "Locate articles on stress management training."

The statements are transmitted via a telecommunications network to a vendor mainframe computer that has loaded a variety of databases. A vendor processes the search query and a response—such as "located 28 references on stress management training"—is returned on-line to the searcher.

The searcher can view or print on-line all 28 references, or the vendor can print them off-line and mail them. Most vendors provide on-line ordering of full text of the referenced articles for an additional fee through a document delivery service.

## Do-it-yourself searching

Trainers interested in performing their own on-line searches may wish to consult an introductory text such as *Online Searching: A Primer* by Fenichel and Hogan. I've provided a glossary of basic on-line searching terms in Figure 4.

An on-line database search usually involves obtaining from a database vendor

a password that serves as a billing mechanism for vendor charges. Trainers can perform searches either on a terminal with an acoustic coupler or modem or on a microcomputer with a modem and telecommunications software. Training in both the system commands of the on-line vendor and the special features of particular databases is essential for really efficient searching.

Three database vendors in the United States that provide computer access to the most important training-related databases are BRS, 1200 Route 7, Latham, NY 12110; Dialog Information Services, 3460 Hillview Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304; and Human Resource Information Network, 9585 Valparaiso Court, Indianapolis, IN 46268.

## Brokered searching

Trainers who are not in a position to perform their own database searching still can

Figure 4—Glossary of on-line searching terms

- Connect time:** The amount of time a remote terminal is connected to a vendor's computer.
- CDROM:** A prerecorded optical disk "played" by a drive that uses a laser beam to read data off the disk. One CDROM can store approximately 275,000 printed pages.
- Database:** A collection of numeric data or textual information that is processed by publishers in computer-readable form for electronic publishing of printed materials and for electronic distribution.
- Database producer:** An organization that compiles or publishes information in machine-readable form.
- Database record:** A collection of related items of data treated as a unit. In a bibliographic database, a record is typically all the information—author, title, date, abstract—stored to represent a document.
- Database vendor:** An organization that provides standardized computer access to a large number of databases through a contract or fee arrangement.
- Free-text searching:** Searching for concepts or words without relying solely on thesaurus vocabulary. Free-text searching usually includes searching titles and abstracts.
- Modem:** A device that converts digital signals from a terminal or personal computer into analog tones that phone lines are capable of transmitting and that reverses the process when the terminal or personal computer receives information from the vendor's computer.
- Off-line:** Computer processing that takes place after the searcher has disconnected and is no longer interacting with the computer.
- On-line:** Ongoing communication between the searcher's and vendor's computers involving immediate transmission of queries and results.
- Telecommunications network:** A system that links user terminals to vendor computers for long-distance data transmission.
- Thesaurus:** List of subject headings used by indexers to assign headings to items in a database, usually cross-referenced and showing relationship among terms. Searchers employing thesaurus terms are likely to produce highly relevant results.

take advantage of the technology in one of two ways.

Many major database producers perform searches of their own files and provide printouts off-line—for example, PsycINFO through its PASAR service or ERIC through its Clearinghouses. An advantage to producer searches is the producer's familiarity with the database content and indexing. The search result is, therefore, typically of high quality. But these "custom searches" are usually fairly expensive, and the trainer loses a great deal of control of the research process.

Alternatively, the trainer may contract with a search intermediary to perform on-line searches. The difference between this alternative and the first is that the intermediary is not a member of the database producer's staff. The typical intermediary is an information professional in an academic library, public library, or corporate setting. Private information consultants or brokers often offer searching as one of their client services.

The intermediary is not usually as familiar with a specific database as is the database producer, but fees for intermediary searches are often low, particularly in public library or public supported universities. Often there is opportunity for face-to-face discussions prior to the search. By making inquiries, it is usually possible to identify an intermediary locally with knowledge of training-related databases who can provide searches at a reasonable cost.

### Training-related databases

The databases described below are reference databases. They refer researchers to other sources rather than contain the actual information referenced. Furthermore, these databases are all bibliographic; that is, they provide access to published information such as journal articles, conference reports, dissertations, or books. In most cases these computer databases are used to produce the printed indexes and abstracts that are found on the shelves of many university and public libraries. Printed versions of the databases listed are noted where appropriate.

■ **ERIC** (Educational Resources Information Center), produced by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, 1200 19th St. NW, Washington, DC 20208.

The ERIC database is a national information system providing access to education literature by and for educational practitioners and scholars. ERIC includes references to journal literature from 750

education-related publications and non-journal literature such as curriculum materials, conference proceedings, program descriptions, and research reports.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education has primary responsibility for adding to the database information relevant to training, from "basic literacy training through professional skill upgrading."

Two monthly printed publications parallel the major divisions of the ERIC database: *Current Index to Journals in Education*, covering the journal literature, and *Resources in Education*, covering the nonjournal material.

■ **ABI/Inform**, produced by UMI/Data Courier, Inc., 620 South Fifth St., Louisville, KY 40202.

ABI/Inform is a business database covering articles from 650 journals, including 200 journals published outside the United States. The database covers the full range of business topics including human resources, general management, marketing, finance, accounting, and the like. Each record includes a 200-word summary of the article content. There is no printed resource corresponding to the on-line database.

The database is segmented by management function codes to increase on-line searching precision. The human resource management functional area is subdivided into five narrow classifications: human resource planning, training and development, labor relations, employee benefits and compensation, and employee problems. As of fall 1985, approximately 10,500 articles in the database were classified with the code for training and development.

■ **PsycINFO**, produced by American Psychological Association, 1200 17th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

The PsycINFO database covers the world's journal literature in psychology and related behavioral sciences. Articles from over 1,100 journals, half of which are published outside the United States, are indexed and abstracted for inclusion in PsycINFO. The print counterpart of the PsycINFO database is the monthly abstract journal *Psychological Abstracts*.

A significant segment of the PsycINFO database references publications in the field of applied psychology, and includes topics very relevant to training research. The major category "applied psychology" is broken down into eight subdivisions including occupational attitudes and interests, personnel selection and training, personnel evaluation and performance,

management and management training, organizational behavior, and job satisfaction. As of fall 1985, about 21,500 articles in PsycINFO were classified as applied psychology.

■ **NTIS**, produced by National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161.

NTIS is the central source for public dissemination and sale of U.S. government-sponsored research. The database includes technical reports and other analyses prepared by national and local government agencies and their contractors or grantees.

The NTIS database includes a substantial number of technical reports on training. These often are in the form of model curricula, training manuals, demonstration programs, case studies, and simulations. The database is particularly strong in computer-based training documents. Various branches of the armed forces sponsor much of the material for application to military personnel training. In fall 1985 over 7,000 reports were classified in the section of the database designated as "job training and career development."

The biweekly publication *Government Reports Announcements and Index* represents the NTIS computerized database in print. Trainers may order copies of NTIS-referenced reports from NTIS in paper or microfiche.

■ **WILSONLINE—Business Periodicals Index**, produced by H.W. Wilson Company, 950 University Ave., Bronx, NY 10452.

Business Periodicals Index (BPI), available for on-line searching through WILSONLINE, indexes 300 of the most important English-language journals in trade and business research. Key training-related journals are included in the coverage. BPI is unlike other databases described here in that the database producer serves as the database vendor through WILSONLINE. BPI is not available on Dialog or BRS, so to search the database trainers must learn a unique system command language.

BPI is updated twice per week, which makes it a source of very current information. Because it covers the core business journals, most of the articles it references are available in local libraries. As of fall 1985, however, BPI discontinued providing abstracts for articles referenced in the database. A unique feature provided by WILSONLINE is the ability to conduct a simultaneous search over BPI and Education Index, another H.W. Wilson database. This may be helpful for researching

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training topics that span the education and business disciplines. The print counterpart to BPI online is the *Business Periodicals Index*.

The new optical disk technology being used in computer-based training programs is also beginning to find application in information storage and retrieval. Recently, large portions of both the ERIC and PsycINFO databases became available for purchase on CDROM. The training profes-

sional of the future will undoubtedly be able to access on a single CDROM an entire HRD library containing most of the resources discussed here.

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## **Bibliography**

If you'd like more information on finding information resources in HRD, the following list of literature may be able to help.

*Annual: Developing Human Resources.* University Associates, Inc., San Diego.

*Annual Review of Psychology.* Annual Reviews, Inc., Palo Alto, California.

*ASTD Buyer's Guide & Consultant Directory.* ASTD, Alexandria, Virginia.

*Handbook of Human Resource Development.* L. Nadler, ed., John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1984.

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