

**CCL-EAR Committee Review
NewsBank: America's Newspapers
Spring 2005**

Selected members of the CCL-EAR Committee, independently or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staffs, reviewed America's Newspapers. Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member(s) only and not transferred to others. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the proposal to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Attributes of the information resource were assessed on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing the "least value" and 4 representing the "most value."

The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE: 3, 3

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the community colleges as a whole.

Review Committee Comments on the Information Database:

NewsBank, Inc. has become a familiar name in Community College libraries with its large but easily navigated newspaper databases. At the heart of their product line is the revamped product, *America's Newspapers*. Here, patrons have easy access to full-text articles from over 500 U.S. newspapers.

As the name implies, *America's Newspapers* is a collection of local and national newspapers, some that offer full-text as far back as 1977. This date can be deceiving, however, as actual full-text start dates vary greatly from publication to publication. A closer look at the source list reveals that, of the 535 titles in the database, the lion's share only go back to the early 2000s.

Taken as a whole, *America's Newspapers* is clearly an impressive and unique database. Most metropolitan papers are included and every state in the Union is represented. However, looking at the product for its usefulness in the community college setting, one has to question whether local newspapers (outside of California) are really of value to our students. For example, will local papers from Wyoming, Vermont or Missouri, etc. be used enough by our students to warrant paying for them? In answering that question, it occurs to us that *America's Newspapers* may be a better fit for larger public libraries. Many California community colleges meet the needs of their students by providing just national and the major California newspapers.

Date coverage in *America's Newspapers* is relatively shallow in many cases (1 to 3 years), especially for all California papers - useful for current topics, but 9/11, for example, becomes history. The dropdown box in the search area allows you to limit to years as far back as 1977, but that is a de facto limit to a very few papers. The blurb on the search page in front of papers from Knight Ridder implies that issues are available back to 1980 for any given paper, but this is not true for most papers from them. This would be a good place for less KR marketing hype and more information. For example, it would be nice to have hot links to websites or phone numbers where back issues can be obtained, with a warning if they are not free.

In order to find an inclusive list of California papers, small and large, patrons need to choose the second shortcut entitled California Papers. Here, one finds a much greater sampling of titles – over 70 in all. Each newspaper provides local and regional news including information about companies and industries, sports and cultural activities, and people in the community – paid advertising is excluded. In the end, unfortunately, whether one's actual local paper is included seems to be more or less hit or miss. Those who hail from the small town of Willits will be pleased, while those from the larger Santa Barbara County much less so. On a regional note, geographic coverage does not extend to the Sierra Nevada or Foothill papers: The Grass Valley Union, Sonora Union Democrat, Auburn Journal, Truckee Republican, Placerville Mountain Democrat, Tahoe Daily World or Stockton Record would be nice-to-haves. These papers would probably be more appropriate for public library use, but having a couple of mountain papers would be useful for the forest, environment, wildlife and urban/wildland interface topics studied at mountain community colleges.

A second, potentially misleading, notion is the presentation of a link to *local* newspaper titles. For patrons in search of hometown news, it would only seem logical that a click on "local papers" would do the trick. However, the list is not necessarily local – instead, the so-called local papers are actually the major Northern California newspapers such as the Sacramento Bee, the San Jose Mercury-News, and the San Francisco Chronicle. Of course, not everyone lives in a major city and this news would hardly be local in nature to many readers.

Its interesting that *America's Newspapers*, which uses an American flag in its logo, includes newspapers from South America, Central America, and the United States, but not Canada.

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Title lists: how are titles counted, e.g. journals with title changes counted once or more than once? Are full-text titles counted only when content is current? How often are lists updated?
 - Newspaper titles with name changes are counted one time
 - Newspaper titles are counted if they are current or defunct
 - Newspaper title lists are updated within the product and on the website ([Http://infoweb.NewsBank.com](http://infoweb.NewsBank.com)) on a weekly basis.
- Is there overlap in content between this and other products by the same vendor?

- Sources may overlap between products, but the search engine, indexing and interface vary greatly and support different user needs. These would be considered complementary products.
- How many titles are embargoed? Are they accurately reflected in the title list?
 - None of the titles are embargoed
- How many, or what percentage of titles are in full-text?
 - 100% of the titles are in full-text
- Does content accumulate or is there a rolling file?
 - Content accumulates for each title

SEARCH INTERFACE: 3,3

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

Review Committee Comments on the Search Interface:



Essential to NewsBank's claim that *America's Newspapers* is "the ultimate newspaper archive," is the ability of users to choose sources from all over the United States. Patrons will find no shortage of options when determining which newspapers they want to explore. The opening search page defaults to a search of the entire database (535 titles) but also offers a colorful image map which allows patrons to scroll over a state, click on the link, and see the list of newspapers for that state. The map is also color-coded to show the various

regions (i.e. Pacific, New England, and South Atlantic) that may be searched as a whole. Here users must be careful to use the regional legend on the left – any clicking on the map itself will result in a single state list. Yet another feature to limit newspapers is the left-hand list of “search shortcuts” – allowing patrons to choose local papers (whatever that may mean), California titles, or National titles. It is not clear whether the California Titles option would disappear if the subscribing Library resided outside our state. Once into the shortcut, users may also choose one or more specific titles. Again, users must be cautious when using the shortcuts, as a search of the National Titles, does not include any of the California papers. For some, a misguided click and they will miss out on an important segment of National news sources. By and large, however, the ability to limit by region or title is useful, especially for those who carefully choose the region and resources they wish to peruse.

After patrons have chosen the newspapers they desire, searching becomes easy and relatively straightforward. There is a basic search box where patrons enter one or more keywords. A timeframe may be chosen using the drop down menu or by inserting a custom date. Again, here the user needs to be aware of how far back his desired newspaper goes. One may also choose to see results by Best Matches First, or by the default Most Recent Matches First. This option occurs before the search but not once the results are returned. To re-sort, however, it is necessary to do another search. Patrons also have the choice to do an advanced search. Here they may search two fields of the document using AND, OR, and NOT. This includes but is not limited to All Text, First/Lead Paragraph, Headline, and Index terms. The option to sort results disappears with the advanced search, which seems to make little sense. Finally, keywords within each resulting article are highlighted in bold. Patrons may at this point print the article, save it to a folder, or e-mail it for future use. A folder for search history is automatically generated for each search session. Overall, the search interface is simple yet malleable – offering users a variety of searching options and useful features.

Overall, *America's Newspapers* page layout is superior to *NewsFile*. It shares the common problem of having to scroll to the right on a monitor set to 800x600. The page layout on both the results and article pages contains a large tool bar on the left-hand side of the screen. The tool bar takes up too much space for the information included.

SEARCH SHORTCUTS:

- The World
- Create Custom List

FOLDERS:

- Searches this Session
- Saved Articles

MORE RESOURCES

- Global NewsBank
- NewsBank NewsFile Collection
- NewsBank ScienceSource Collection
- Business NewsBank
- NewsBank Retrospective
- Noticias en Español
- StatBank @
- AccessUN
- AccessUN
- State Educational Standards

SEARCHING: THE WORLD 728 titles - [See a List](#)

for: **SEARCH** [Advanced Search](#) | [New Search](#)

return:

timeframe: all years custom date:

Search Hints:
To find an exact name or phrase, use quotes.
Custom date example: Jan 1, 2000 - Feb 3, 2000.

Results: 1 - 10 of at least 200 [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) | [Next](#)

[Edit Search](#) [Show First Paragraph](#)

- Joplin Globe, The (MO)** - April 15, 2005 *length: 6522 words* Save this Article
[Sports](#)
Missouri Western at Missouri Southern (1-9), 4 p.m.Joplin at Carl Junction, 4:15 p.m.; Wheaton at College Heights, 4:30 p.m.College Heights at Sarcoxie, 4 p.m.; Carl Junction, Webb City, Joplin B in Cassville Tournament, 8:30 a.m.McAuley in Ozark Tournament.Missouri Southern vs. Southwest Baptist, 10 a.m.; vs. Pittsburg State, 2 p.m.; vs. Northwest Oklahoma, 4 p.m., Pittsburg State Classic.Joplin,...
- CNN** - April 13, 2005 *length: 3332 words* Save this Article
[ID Theft & Personal Data - Eric Rudolph Pleads Guilty - Silicone Breast Implants](#)
DARYN KAGAN, CNN ANCHOR: And here's a look at what's happening "Now in the News."Afghanistan says it wants a long-term security relationship with the U.S. And that could include a permanent U.S. troop presence in the country. President Hamid Karzai says he's preparing to submit a formal request to President Bush.An fugitive ex-convict suspected of killing two people and raping a teenage girl was due in federal court today. Stephen Stanko was caught

Two nice features included in *America's Newspapers* are the ability to save an article to a list. Saved articles can be emailed all at once. The recipient receives a single email with all the articles included. The second feature is the ability to email a single article directly from the article display page.

The drop-down timeframe limiters in *America's Newspapers* are much better than they are in *NewsFile*. In *America's Newspapers*, from the basic search screen, one is able to choose any year (back to 1977) as well as yesterday or today, past week, 3, 6, or 12 months. *America's Newspapers* also has a custom date search box with one clear example of how to fill it in properly on the basic search screen.

Like *NewsFile*, there is no citation builder to help students correctly site resources. There is good information in the Help section giving examples of correct citation in various formats.

In-depth reviews of NewsBank products appeared in 2002 in both the Charleston Advisor and on SEIR's website (California State University – System Electronic Information Resources). SEIR's product reviews contains both a thorough review of NewsBank and vendor response at <http://seir.calstate.edu/reviews/index.shtml>. Some search interface features that were troublesome to the SEIR reviewers have been addressed by NewsBank and some have not depending on the individual database. Neither *America's Newspapers* nor *NewsFile* have made a change that was promised by the end of

the second quarter 2002: to create a link from the newspaper name to find information about the paper – publisher, dates covered, circulation, etc.

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Does the database have an administrator module? If so, what features are available? How much customization is supported?
 - Currently the database does not have an administrator module. However, our customer service department will work with each individual library to customize the interface by allowing libraries to pick and choose individual titles or groups of titles that can be spiked out along the left hand side of the interface. For example, an institution can spike out their local title such as the San Jose Mercury News or a California Package.
- Does the database allow downloading? Emailing? Printing?
 - Yes, the database allows downloading, emailing and printing
- Does printing work from both the browser and the vendor interface?
 - Printing currently only works through the browser
- Does product require special computer configuration or equipment? (E.g. headphones, specific monitor resolution, etc.)
 - No, only a computer with Internet access and a Web browser and system meeting the MINIMUM requirements detailed in the chart below are needed. Enhancements provided by meeting the RECOMMENDED requirements include increased viewing area (less scrolling required) and more easily accessible controls such as buttons, drop-down fields, and dialog boxes.

Requirements	Minimum	Recommended
Netscape Navigator	4.7	6.0 or newer
MS Internet Explorer	5.0	6.0 or newer
Safari	1.0	1.2
HTML Tables	X	X
Certificates		X
Cookies Enabled	X	X
Java Enabled		X
JavaScript Enabled	X	X
Screen Resolution	640 X 480	800 X 600
Colors Depth	256 Color	High Color

Additionally, NewsBank offers a text-only version of the interface suitable for use with Lynx over dumb terminals.

- Are links to local holdings available? (E.g. Serials Solutions, SFX, Open URL, etc.)
 - NewsBank works with link resolving vendors to provide the current and accurate source lists for the full-text newspaper databases. These are updated monthly to reflect all changes in the database. We currently are working with Serials Solutions and ExLibris and will soon be working with others and are willing to work with any vendor as needed. NewsBank is OpenURL compliant. As stated above, we provide title-level linking information to link resolver vendors (Like Serials Solutions) and we provide OpenURL-compliant persistent links on every displayed article/document.
- Are MARC records available? If so, fee or free? Can vendor provide sample MARC records?
 - Yes, NewsBank provides fully compliant MARC cataloging records for each of the titles in the full-text newspaper database for use in library catalogs and other systems that utilize cataloging information at no additional charge.

A key feature of these records is a title-specific URL link (in field 856) that will take users directly to the search page for a specific source in the database. The records will match the list of newspaper sources in a subscription. The records can be easily downloaded by customers by going to a URL designed for this purpose and logging in with your customer account number.

- Sample records are available upon request
- Does the database have persistent links to articles?
 - Yes, NewsBank provides OpenURL-compliant persistent links on every displayed article/document.
- Does product work well on both Windows and Macintosh and with all browsers?
 - Yes. Please see the above noted Web browser and system MINIMUM requirements for additional information.
- Is the full-text of the articles searchable? (e.g. PDF)
- The full-text of the entire ASCII article is searchable.

COST 3,3

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

Review Committee Comments on Cost:

America's Newspapers is competitively priced in comparison to other major vendors.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 3, 3.5

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone helpline available?

Review Committee Comments on User Support Services:

The Help function within *America's Newspapers* is one of the most thorough I have encountered. Available from every screen in the database, the Help page offers users important information on searching, sorting, and citing newspaper articles. Product descriptions start from very little knowledge of the product, which will make them useful to new students. It also provides examples of popular searches – with handy tips on how to locate everything from recipes and book reviews to obituaries. There are helpful hints for searching by topic and by specific newspapers. The Simple and Advanced Search functions are explained and the examples are clear and concise.

A list of their 35 stop words is given, and this seems like a moderate number. None of the words look like you would miss them much. The nice feature is that you can use single quotes to force the search to look for any of the stop words. For those venturing into the help screen, the scope and detail of this content is impressive.

Some of the headings were ambiguous in the "Table of Contents" to the Help Screens, or did not indicate what was really discussed under them. The "How to Cite" heading was clear as to what was contained, but a couple of them were less clear:

- “Results Sorting Tips,” for example, was where I found out they use AND as the default when searching more than one word.
- I’m not sure people would expect to find the excellent list of search examples under the heading “Getting Started.” Great examples of how to find obituaries, book reviews, etc. is very clearly presented, but somewhat hidden under that heading.
- “Working With Articles” turned out to cover printing, saving, emailing and search history. I wouldn’t have thought to look for this information under that title.

“How to Cite” using MLA and PLA styles looks very useful. (I showed it to a student, and she really liked the show-by-example format.)

- I checked the citation examples against our documentation of MLA styles, and as far as I looked, they differed only in the comma versus a colon after the date year.
- The source (a style manual by Li and Cranes) is given for the styles shown. I think that shows a commitment to good information practice.
- There were lots of useful examples, like how to cite wire service reports, radio and speech transcripts, etc.
- The abbreviation par. is used for paragraph, but since I have been asked a few times what that abbreviation stood for in a citation, I think it should be spelled out.
- Footnoting and parenthetical cites are covered. Nice brief overview of parenthetical cites in the text, now heavily used in scientific papers.

A second tier of user support worth noting is customer service. In the process of evaluating the NewsBank products, certain questions arose that provided useful fodder for testing the Customer Service and Technical Support Group. Located on the Help page, the Contact NewsBank link provides users with a link to the company’s website, a toll-free phone number, or an email address to send questions or concerns. In several cases, emails to the company received a speedy response (in less than 12 hours). Telephone service is also prompt and knowledgeable. It is easy to talk to a “real person.” I called at mid-day on a Monday, and they picked up on the third ring. That shows a commitment to no waiting. However, when I asked for information about back files on two of the papers (one from a big news company, one a small independent), I was referred to the websites of the newspapers, with no offer to give me the website URL or the phone number of the newspaper.

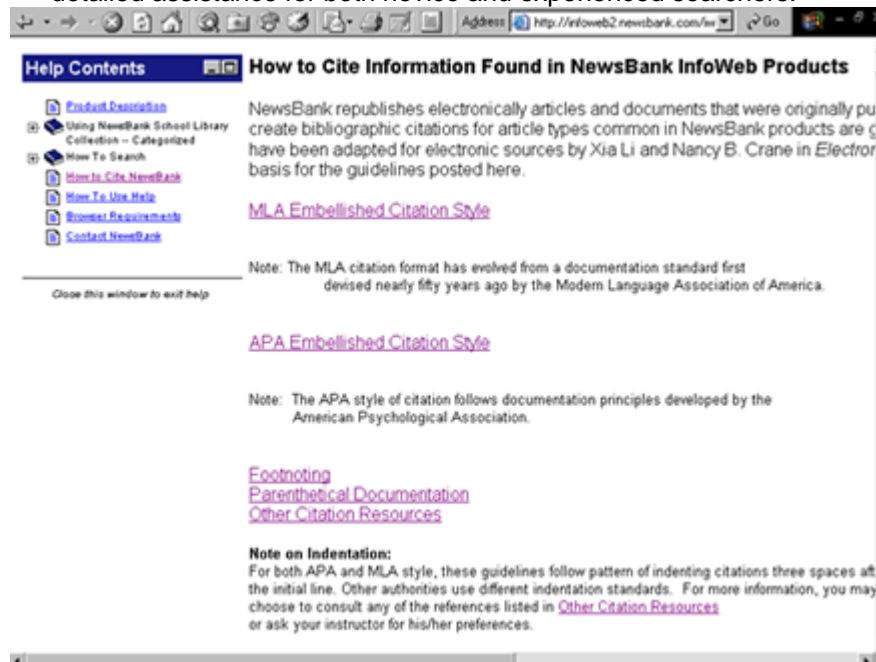
Customer Service department closes at 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time, too early for Californians, especially evening classes. Only Eastern time is mentioned, so that someone from here might assume that they can call up until 7:00 p.m.

Maintaining a list of all the information about their newspapers’ archives would be expensive and time consuming. But providing phone numbers and/or web links in

their help screens would be a nice-to-have for libraries open outside of the limited Newsbank Customer Service phone center hours.

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Is documentation required for successful use of product? Where is it?
 - No documentation is required for successful use of the product as our interface is user friendly. However, we do currently provide access to all NewsBank user aides & product training information online in a printable format to help aid and enhance the user experience. All customers will have access to the following training materials at no additional charge:
 - Welcome Letter - Includes Access Information and Customer Service Contact Information
 - Access to the Use Booster Web Site - Unique to NewsBank, this website provides ideas and tools to showcase NewsBank products in your library, and increase their usage.
 - Product "Help" Link - Within each product you will find a blue HELP link on the black bar located at the top of the SEARCH page. The help index contains detailed assistance for both novice and experienced searchers.



Note: All training materials are available for download from the HELP files.

- Usage Statistics - This website allows you to monitor the number of times NewsBank's products are used in your library.
- Online Orientation - This orientation is designed to help you become more familiar with NewsBank, the value of primary source information, and search techniques that will help you find information quickly and effectively.
- NewsBank promotional posters are available upon request.
- Is online help available? Is it context sensitive?
 - Yes online help is available. NewsBank's products provide online help screens on how to use, cite and support the database as well as access to NewsBank's Orientation Workshop. NewsBank's online help is context sensitive by product. Please see the above answer for additional details.
- What types of user training are available? Fee or free?

- Please see the above answer to “Is documentation required for successful use of product? Where is it?” for the free training options and contact NewsBank for pricing on any other desired training.
- What types of technical support are available? (E.g. telephone, email, hours available)
 - NewsBank’s Customer Support is available through our Customer Service Support Desk at (800) 243-7694 from 8:30 AM to 7:00 PM (EST), Monday through Friday. Our Customer Service Support Desk is a full service department, whose phones are answered by a live person able to answer questions about the product, its use and for troubleshooting technical problems.
 - NewsBank’s Customer Service Support Desk can be reached as follows:
Phone: (800) 243-7694
Fax: (802) 875-2904
E-mail: CustService@NewsBank.com
- How does the vendor alert subscribers to changes in the database?
 - Customers are notified of changes in the database via phone, fax or e-mail as needed.
- Is there a vendor or product listserv or user group?
 - Not available
- Where can the license agreement be accessed?
 - Institutions can contact the customer service department to obtain a copy of the license agreement.
 - NewsBank’s Customer Service Support Desk can be reached as follows:
Phone: (800) 243-7694
Fax: (802) 875-2904
- E-mail: CustService@NewsBank.com

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE 3,3

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

Review Committee Comments on Accessibility of Service:

I experienced no problems with the connection to the database. The response time was adequate and NewsBank supports remote authentication.

Connection speed was adequate and the product was stable.

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Is the database ADA/Section 508 compliant? If not, what is the timeframe for compliance? Is there a “text-only” version?
 - Our interfaces, to the best of our knowledge, are ADA compliant, though we have not formally validated them (i.e. using 3rd party tools). NewsBank product conform to Section 508 Guidelines, however, we have not checked for compliance with the W3C guidelines.
- Is remote access available and, if so, what forms of authentication are supported? (E.g. IP, referring URL, username and password, etc.)
 - America’s Newspapers allows remote access for over 90% of the collection. Due to publisher restrictions some titles may not be available remotely.
 - NewsBank uses the following authentication methods for both on-site and remote access:
 - IP Address Range(s)
 - Username/Password authenticated by NewsBank
 - HTTP referral (Referring URL) from a known, secure authenticated site.
 - NewsBank can host a library card authentication page and NewsBank verifies library card numbers. In order to implement this, the library must

provide NewsBank with a "pattern" describing valid library card numbers, e.g. 15 digits, first 5 are digits are "45782".

- Does the vendor's definition of "Authorized Users" include full and part-time faculty, students and staff affiliated with the subscribing library as well as walk-in users?
 - Yes. NewsBank defines an Authorized User as "limited to administrators, staff, faculty, and patrons/students of the Customer's institution or organization as well as other users of the Customer's on-site computer facilities (walk-in users)." Please see the NewsBank License Agreement for additional details <http://www.cclibraries.org/rights-restrictions/Newsbank.html>.
- If the database is cancelled, is access available to earlier content to which the library subscribed?
 - No, the content is only available to subscribing customers
- Does the vendor allow interlibrary loan of subscription content?
 - Not available

OVERALL 3, 3

Review Committee Comments:

America's Newspapers provides every day's full-text articles from the electronic editions of record for 535 U.S. papers under one interface. Much of the content in *America's Newspapers* is unique local coverage that provides students and faculty with the possibility of researching issues city-to-city, state-by-state or region-by-region. Users may also just want to read their hometown paper (if it is among the local papers included.) However, as was mentioned earlier, *America's Newspapers* may be a product more suitable to larger public libraries than to California's community colleges. Although much improved, the search interface and page layout is still somewhat cumbersome and distracting. Many of NewsBank's competitors have simpler and more appealing search interfaces and page layout. NewsBank has added the ability to email articles but lacks a citation builder, which is a handy feature in an academic setting. The product is reliable and stable, and response time is adequate. Customer support is very good, despite the fact that hours are limited for customers on the west coast. The addition of a link from the newspaper to find information about the paper – publisher, dates covered, circulation, etc. would be an important improvement to the product.

MY CAMPUS 2, 2

Review Committee Comments:

My campus subscribes to three other databases containing newspaper articles. We would not be inclined to add the NewsBank products in lieu of one of our existing subscriptions.

My campus finds it most economical to subscribe to the major national newspapers and a few of California's bigger papers. There is no need at my campus for local newspapers from across the United States – *America's Newspapers* has content that would be a luxury purchase, not an essential one.