

IndexCat

What is IndexCat?

IndexCat is a digitized version of the printed *Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General's Office*, a multi-part printed bibliography or list of items in the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office, U.S. Army. It contains material dated from the 1400s through 1950 and is an important resource for researchers in the history of medicine or science.

Does Himmelfarb offer a link to IndexCat?

Yes, IndexCat is available on the E-Databases page. Since it is a freely available resource, all you need to do is follow the link.

How does IndexCat differ from MEDLINE?

Essentially, IndexCat is pre-MEDLINE. It contains the citations of the Surgeon General's Office through 1950. MEDLINE picks up in 1950. There are some subtle differences, too. IndexCat contains materials not indexed by MEDLINE such as dissertations and monographs.

What are the advantages to using IndexCat?

IndexCat is a digitized version of the Index-Catalogue. As a digitized resource search access is not limited to the dictionary arrangement used in the print version. Users may search all descriptive information as direct search terms. Further, it supports searches for all author names in any citations. IndexCat allows search limits and search selections. For example, users may choose to search across all five series, the broadest possible search or a specific series or volume within a series.

What are the disadvantages to using IndexCat?

Searching IndexCat is not as fluid or intuitive as searching MEDLINE and other familiar databases. The help menus are embedded in the system and provide tips for effective searching. Full-text is not easily accessible since the materials indexed into IndexCat are much older than the Himmelfarb's collection. Time is needed for ordering or otherwise obtaining documents.

What is the best way to search IndexCat?

Two search options are offered: Quick Search and Advanced Search. Start with Quick Search, it will allow you to search by keyword anywhere. For example, search a word or phrase (you might try "yellow fever") to find all the records that contain that phrase anywhere in the record - in the title, in the subject headings, in the notes. In contrast, the advanced search allows more precise searching. You might combine a title search for "yellow fever" and an author search for "Rush Benjamin" to find articles about yellow fever written by Benjamin Rush, M.D.

How do I access full-text?

Since IndexCat provides citations for older material, you will likely need to borrow or request the materials through the Himmelfarb Library. The Himmelfarb Library keeps print journals prior to 1980 off-site. These materials can be easily requested at no charge. If the Himmelfarb does not own the material you need, an interlibrary loan (ILL) can be placed using the Documents2Go system or you might choose to visit the National Library of Medicine History of Medicine Division in Bethesda, MD.

Does IndexCat work with Bibliographic Management Software?

At present, IndexCat does not work with bibliographic management software such as RefWorks or EndNote.

How can I get more help?

Search assistance is available at the Reference Desk. Stop at the desk, call 202-994-2850 or email library@gwumc.edu