

# PSYCHEDELIC DATA ENTRY: BUILDING THE FUTURE BY PRESERVING THE PAST

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**Touching history is one of the most exciting things you can do.** Entering thousands of entries into a database is not. Nor are removing tape, sorting papers, or digging through musty filing cabinets. However, this seemingly uninspiring work gave me the chance to touch both the past and future of psychedelic research, as I helped in two projects to organize old data for new use.

## LSD and psilocybin bibliography

Since November 2001, I have been helping Earth & Fire Erowid (who run the large and thorough drug information site, [www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org)) to digitize the Albert Hofmann Foundation Collection, creating an online searchable database of peer-reviewed, published scientific literature on LSD and psilocybin. Originally compiled by the staff of the Sandoz Pharmaceutical Corporation during Albert Hofmann's residence there, this collection of about four thousand documents represents nearly every research paper on LSD or psilocybin published worldwide between the mid-1940s and the mid-1970s. Medline, the National Institutes of Health database of medical literature, only goes back to about 1966, omitting the majority of the psychedelic research papers. And while Medline contains bibliographic entries, most with abstracts but only a few with links to the entire paper, our database will include bibliographic entries with abstracts and with links to each paper.

Albert Hofmann donated the papers to the Albert Hofmann Foundation, which lent them to Erowid for the digitizing project. MAPS is sponsoring

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ing this effort and, in addition to the donation of my labor and the purchase of document storage materials, has spent about \$7200 thus far to create searchable PDF files of the papers. Over the winter of 2001/2002 I helped Erowid to verify entries and enter miss-

ing data into a computer index of the articles, and in March 2002 I visited the San Francisco Bay area to help Erowid prepare the actual documents for scanning. The collection is composed of about 20 boxes, each containing books of papers, many of which are yellowed and brittle with age. We carefully removed the papers from the books and sorted them, hand-scanning those that were too delicate to risk a trip to the scanning company. Earth and Fire have now returned the papers to books, which will be sent back to Albert Hofmann in Switzerland.

The database will allow students, researchers, and other interested folks to perform keyword searches to find relevant articles, and then download or print the papers. It will be available on the websites for MAPS ([www.maps.org](http://www.maps.org)), Erowid ([www.erowid.org](http://www.erowid.org)), and the Albert Hofmann Foundation ([www.hofmann.org](http://www.hofmann.org)). In this way, the world's early scientific literature on LSD and psilocybin will not be lost in dusty libraries but made accessible in perpetuity to anyone with curiosity and a computer.

### **LSD-assisted psychotherapy patient files**

In October and November 2001, I helped Richard Yensen, Ph.D. and Donna Dryer MD, who direct the Orenda Institute, organize data from past LSD therapy studies conducted at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, under the direction of Albert Kurland, MD. Yensen and Dryer submitted a protocol to FDA in July 2001 for LSD-assisted psychotherapy with terminal cancer patients, which FDA placed on Clinical Hold in August 2001. In addition to requesting several changes in protocol design, FDA asked for more background information, particularly safety data, from earlier LSD psychotherapy studies with cancer patients. Working with Yensen and Dryer,

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I reviewed the files of cancer patients treated with LSD in the 1960s and early 1970s by the pioneer psychedelic researcher, Walter Pahnke, MD. I created case report forms with which to record data, and completed forms for the 25 cancer patient files still available after thirty years. I compiled information about each patient's LSD session, including dosage, concomitant medications,

and any adverse events. Another volunteer, Jennifer Landis, has completed forms for about 300 other patient files, primarily from counselor

training sessions and studies with alcoholic or neurotic patients.

Handling the actual raw data from these patients' files was a powerful and convincing experience. I was able to read first-person accounts of LSD sessions written by men and women from all walks of life – factory workers and executives, housewives and lawyers, young and old people. These were fascinating, and often described cathartic and transformative experiences. Examining the medical records, I noted how patients often voluntarily reduced their dosage of pain medications in the days following the session. I also read letters from patients' families thanking Dr. Pahnke and the other researchers; many of these reported that after the LSD session, their loved ones had been able to finally accept impending death and focus on enjoying their last days.

In both projects, we hope that our efforts to archive history will aid future researchers and students, so that the knowledge of the past will be preserved, and the potential of these substances to help people can be further explored and applied. ■