

RE:refresh!

Reference Service News from Middletown Thrall Library

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"Information is the oxygen of the modern age." Ronald Reagan

From the Head of Reference

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Welcome to our *fifth* issue of *RE:refresh!* This is where Middletown Thrall Library's Reference Department updates you on its ongoing efforts to empower you with the very best research tools and resources available!

We encourage you to take advantage of our work and to make full use of all these **free** services, many of which Thrall members can access at home.

Past issues of *RE:refresh!* can be downloaded from our website at www.thrall.org/refresh

Everything for You

We care about the information you seek, encounter, and ingest, so much that we never stop asking, "What else can we do?" We continue to expand and refine our offerings in the library and online because you – our readers, researchers, and our community – are our *highest priority*.

We know you deserve the best information available. We believe you deserve *better* results than what the most popular search engines tend to present. We think our library can offer the *best of all worlds*: *traditional* materials as well as *modern* and *innovative* services and resources.

Our Reference Department works all year long, creating and developing library collections, pathfinders, displays, public services, programs, and more – all *on your behalf*. We hope the following developments further exemplify our dedication to you. It is our honor to serve you.

LightSwitch Search Tools

www.thrall.org/lightswitch

We are excited to bring you a new generation of educational and interactive Internet search tools called LightSwitch.

Developed as part of our larger information literacy effort known as LIGHT, LightSwitch connects you with some of the best specialized search engines available online.

LightSwitch searches provide flexible and innovative environments for online researchers.

Central to LightSwitch's design is the ability for users to switch quickly from one topic to another and to conduct more *specific* searches (as opposed to relying on one general-purpose search engine). For example, if you switch the topic to Health and Wellness, the default search becomes MedlinePlus.

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Additional subject-specific engines appear atop lists of search engines in each LightSwitch page.

For any given LightSwitch topic there is an expandable "enlightenment" panel of search terms which will appear when you click on an "enlighten your search" link. Once you do so, a variety of keywords, phrases, names, and subject headings appear, and you can select and add any of these words to your search.

For example, if you select Art, you can browse and add art terms, names of famous artists, titles of notable works of art, and integrate other related keywords into your query.

Some topics, such as Astronomy, Literature, and Mathematics, feature book titles as well.

The "enlightenment" panel also includes links to related Thrall Internet guides and subsections in those guides which might contain websites helpful to your research.

LightSwitch also provides a set of "keyword tools," which you can use to mark ("plus") keywords as mandatory, convert searches to phrases, and more. If you select Google as a search engine, additional tools for Google's search modifiers (e.g. site:) appear, allowing you to take advantage of that search engine's advanced commands.

You can choose from *many different search engines!*

As you search, you might also want to see what books, videos, and other items your local library might provide for your topic. With that in mind, LightSwitch lets you search any RCLS library's catalog: select "RCLS Library Catalog" as a search engine. Additional options (including the ability to limit results to the library you select) will appear.

LightSwitch also gives you the option of having search results displayed in their own window: just check the little box under the search engine list.

LightSwitch's predecessor, Proteus, was created with the intent of educating researchers and encouraging them to explore a diversity of search engines. Through Proteus, users could compare the quality of search results, adjust search strategies, and eventually graduate from Proteus and go on to visit specific search engines as needed.

LightSwitch remains committed to this educational philosophy and offers a comprehensive "Help" page where researchers are encouraged to visit individual search engine sites (including help and "search tips" pages) to learn more about those searches.

LightSwitch is a public service we will continue to develop and refine. We hope you get a chance to try it and see how useful and informative it could be.

Ready Reference Center 3.0

www.thrall.org/readyref

Our **Ready Reference Center** has experienced its third and most major revision to date! It now offers universal RCLS library access to all related library catalog resource headings built into every Ready Reference page.

What does this mean? If you are a researcher and a member of any library within the Ramapo Catskill Library System (www.rcls.org), you can take full advantage of the **Library Resources** panels built into each subject page in the Ready Reference Center.

These subject heading panels enable you to peer more deeply and meaningfully into the expansive library catalog that serves the library system. You can instantly browse specific topics and finer subdivisions within those topics.

A children's edition of our Ready Reference Center is also nearing completion!

Special Coverage Center Updated

www.thrall.org/special

Since 2006, our Special Coverage guides highlighted essential and definitive information sources (including local, state, and federal government agencies), contact information, and relevant library and Internet resources.

Our Special Coverage Center was recently redesigned to improve our ability to connect you with key resources on current interests and issues. New features include a blog, a search, and an RSS feed.

Recent topics include: the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, the European debt crisis, Network Neutrality, and more.

New information is added as events unfold, and existing guides are updated as necessary.

New Entertainment Guide

www.thrall.org/entertainment

We thoroughly revised and expanded our Entertainment guide! In addition to television, movies, and theater resources, you can now access popular topics such as: celebrities, comedy, comics, entertainment magazines, entertainment news, family fun, game shows, performing arts, radio shows, trivia, video games, and more!

Our guide also gives you instant access to popular movies within the library system as well as the ability to browse a wide variety of entertainment topics in the library catalog.

Bringing You "All the Best!"

www.thrall.org/catalog

Locating truly great books recently became a little easier at our website: you can now locate awarded works and authors by year and prize (Pulitzer, etc.). Just go to our **library catalog page** (through our home page or via the link above) and click the **Best Books Lists** link on the right column. On that same page you can also follow the **Random Reads** link and browse some **Random Greats!**

New Publications for Researchers

www.thrall.org/docs

Researchers are invited to read some documents we recently published at our website: **Diversify Your Search**, **404 Not Found**, and **Not Online**.

Community Organizations Database

www.thrall.org/corgs

In the past, Middletown Thrall Library, along with other libraries in the Ramapo Catskill Library System, contributed information to a community organization database hosted at RCLS, which was accessible through the library catalog. That database is no longer available.

Thrall independently recommenced this effort with the intent of documenting community organizations located in and/or serving residents within Orange County, NY.

We created an entirely new database system which has its own search engine and a number of new topics and browsing options. You can also locate similar organizations by following topics linked within each record.

Reference staff is currently working to confirm or update information last checked in 2008. Each record in the database indicates when it was last verified.

Colleges & Universities Guide Updated

www.thrall.org/college

Our guide to universities and college information has been expanded. Additions include a new **OpenCourseWare** section, where you can browse free college lectures and course materials offered by major universities online.

Local History Searches Updated

thrall.org/obitdb and thrall.org/findimages

Our Local History Department's obituary database and photograph search engine were upgraded recently. Obituaries can now be searched by specific fields (e.g. date of birth or maiden name). The photograph search engine has improved results as well as sample searches.

Also be sure to check out the newly expanded Local History Department page and its Internet resource guide: www.thrall.org/lh and www.thrall.org/lhlinks.htm

New Databases & Encyclopedias

www.thrall.org/databases

Members of Thrall can now access these new titles at home over the Internet:

- **Encyclopedia of Scientific Principles**
- **Encyclopedia of Women's Health**
- **Eyewitness Companion: Great Musicians**
- **Eyewitness Companion: Photography**
- **Eyewitness Companion: Religions**
- **Global Viewpoints: Climate Change**
- **Global Viewpoints: Immigration**
- **Global Viewpoints: Religion**
- **Men's Health Concerns Sourcebook**

Recent changes in New York State's NOVEL database program also granted Thrall and its users access to some very impressive full text article databases including: **Academic OneFile**, **General OneFile**, and a series of **InfoTrac Collections**, which cover topics such as **Agriculture**, **Business Economics**, **Communications**, **Criminal Justice**, **Culinary Arts**, the **Environment**, **Gardening**, **Home Improvement**, and **Psychology**.

These databases and encyclopedias contain *millions* of high-quality and in-depth articles. All titles listed above can be *freely accessed by anyone* within our library! The next time you need to research a topic, please consider them.