

HEAPS — the database for health promotion professionals

HEAPS — the Health Education and Promotion System — is a national database designed to assist people in the health, welfare and education areas to access information on existing health promotion resources and activities throughout Australia. The database is constantly being enhanced, with new information being added and old information removed or updated as appropriate.

HEAPS reduces duplication of effort, maximising the use of existing resources and promoting the multiple use of well-conceived programs.

The database has a coordinator in most States, who is responsible for local promotion and for ensuring that data for that State are added to the database. National coordination and promotion is provided through a national office based in Melbourne at Victoria College.

What does HEAPS provide?

HEAPS maintains a database of both programs and resources in the broad field of health promotion and education.

Resources include such items as audio tapes, booklets, films, pamphlets, posters, slide sets, videos, work books and manuals. Unlike many public information systems, HEAPS does not include books or journals — it aims to provide practical information on the existence and availability of directly usable resources.

The programs component of the database complements the resources information and can best be viewed as a directory of 'who is doing what, where, why and how'. Under programs, HEAPS lists campaigns, courses, projects, seminars and special events with specific health education and promotion objectives and content.

Both components aim to help health workers avoid 're-inventing the wheel'. Program records contain information on objectives, strategies and evaluation. Resources records contain information about the physical format of the resource and its applicability. Both rec-

ord types include contact information for the agency responsible for the program or resource.

At present there are more than 3500 items listed in the HEAPS database. Some two-thirds of these are resources. The subject areas covered include Aboriginal health, alcohol and substance abuse, diet and nutrition, occupational health and safety, and sexuality education.

There are also special collections in identified key areas. One relates to AIDS (funded by the National AIDS Education Program) and another to drugs (funded by the Drug Offensive). The Health Promotion in the Workplace project is currently mounting another special collection using HEAPS as a host database system.

How to use HEAPS

Major libraries, universities, colleges and teaching hospitals have access to HEAPS. Or the database can be used with the help of one of the State HEAPS coordinators. (Contact telephone numbers are listed at the end of the article.) The HEAPS staff will discuss the research strategy, and perform the search on the database. In most cases the service is free. Further information, or copies of resources, can then be obtained from the people listed under each record.

SA initiative

To promote use of the database and increase data collection, Merelyn Boyce of the Social Health Branch, Health Commission of South Australia, the South Australian coordinator of HEAPS, has asked the South Australian Institute of Technology Library to participate in a project that enables the Library to do free searches of the HEAPS database for staff and students.

Staff and students can arrange a HEAPS search by contacting Jan Heath (Health Sciences Librarian; telephone (08) 236 2278) or Judy Till (Nursing Librarian; telephone (08) 236 2346) of the South Australian Institute of Technology.

State HEAPS coordinators

For further information on HEAPS, please contact your local State Coordinator:

- ACT, Wendy Benson, (062) 45 4244
- NSW, Jill Whitehouse, (02) 217 5933
- NT, Lynda Blum, (089) 20 3370
- Qld, Meredith Prentice, (07) 234 0902
- SA, Merelyn Boyce, (08) 226 6053
- Tas., Mary Bent, (002) 30 3554
- Vic., Jenny Waddell, (03) 616 7449
- WA, Betty Durston, (09) 222 2000.

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