

# LIBRARY JOURNAL®

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*By CherylLa Guardia*

**CONTENT:** Rarebooks.info is an online, facsimile library of 144 bibliographic works covering such subjects as architecture, art, cultural studies, early printing, film studies, the history of the book, Judaica, medicine, modern authors, music, natural history, science, theology, travel, and world literature. Titles range from the Catalogue of the Avery Architectural Library to Albert Caillet's Manuel bibliographique des sciences psychiques ou occultes; Leclerc's Bibliotheca Americana (for the full list please consult the List of Available Titles at rarebooks.info/).

**The database includes more than 900,000 pages of both standard and hard-to-find reference sources, which are available in full, searchable facsimile, along with the recent addition of 30-plus in-copyright bibliographies from Oak Knoll Press.**

**USABILITY:** The Rarebooks.info home page is a workmanlike screen with a toolbar offering buttons for Home, About, Guided Tour, Learning, and Contacts. Below these is a description of the database with links to press releases and reviews listed at the right, and four active links at screen left: Search Our Reference Works (Authorized Subscribers), Purchase a Subscription (Individuals), Request a Free Trial (Institutions), and List of Available Titles.

Search Our Reference Works leads to a screen with five option tabs: Basic Search, Advanced Search, Browse Works, Browse Topics, and Search History, with a Search Tips link at far right.

I tried a Basic Search for: "complete angler" as an exact phrase, doing a search of the entire database and using a Fuzzy Search. As the search tips describe, "A fuzzy search can locate all occurrences of a word, together with all other words that are 'close' in spelling to the original word. You specify the degree of closeness to the original word," with the tips explaining that, for example, a one-degree search on the terms "computer" could find words such as "commuter" in which only one letter is different.

Searching within two degrees of "Complete Angler" resulted in 788 hits in 179 pages, and a quick view of the results showed that the system picked up both the "complete" and "compleat" spellings that so often occur for Walton's piscatorial classic.

Running the search again with a Fuzzy Search degree of 3 netted 1,322 hits in 426 pages, and they were all over the place (for example, one result came up for the words "compte" and "langue"). **Now I know that the Search Tips are truly to be relied upon.** It took very little time to do these searches, because it was quick and easy to find and view results, and search terms are highlighted in the results in yellow, making them stand out beautifully. Within just a few minutes I was very comfortable with using Fuzzy Search well, and it is certainly a boon for this particular kind of content.

“Browse Works” lets users do just that, showing an alphabetical list of works in the database, with brief annotations and direct links to view or search each one. This is a good way for newer bibliophiles to learn about all the sources available, while the “Browse Topics” feature lets researchers focus more on their areas of interest. In entries for Oak Knoll Press’s publications there’s also an “Order Now” link allowing researchers to order a print copy of a bibliography.

Under “Browse Topics” are 23 categories, such as Americana, Art and Architecture, Botany, Cinema, Classical Studies, Cooking, Cultural and Area Studies, Judaica, Literature, Magic and the Occult, Maps and Globes, Medicine, Military History, Music, Natural History, Science, and Theology, with links to view titles in each.

In Cinema were resources such as volumes I and II of Kevin Johnson’s *The Dark Page: Books That Inspired American Film Noir*. Clicking the view link for both volumes of the title, however, resulted in the same error message. Clicking the Search link for both volumes led to advanced search, where the last-performed search was displayed. It is surprising that a link from within an individual title didn’t automatically stipulate the searching of that item, and remedying this problem would be a welcome change to future releases. Overall, the technology is a bit slow, and I did find those glitches in the View links—but compared to the power and plusses this file offers, those are minor issues.

When I previously reviewed this database (LJ 3/15/07), librarians were working in a world of mainly desktop computers. The ubiquity of tablets and smartphones has changed the bibliographic game completely. **With the portability of so many standard and unusual bibliographies offered in Rarebooks.info, book professionals can use this splendid resource on the move at antiquarian book fairs worldwide, a marvelous advantage.** The size of the database has grown appreciably since that 2007 review, and with the addition of the Oak Knoll in-copyright titles, the scope (and therefore, the value) of Rarebooks.info has increased.

**PRICING:** Pricing for public and academic libraries ranges from \$725 (for a basic license annual subscription) to \$17,500 (for a perpetual access subscription). Volume discounts are available for multiple-campus institutions and consortia. Individual subscriptions are also available, at \$3 per day, \$80 per month, and \$245 per year.

**VERDICT:** Based on content and delivery, I recommend this database to anyone doing extensive bibliographic antiquarian work (book buyers, book sellers, librarians, and scholars). Institutions with limited budgets may want to recommend individual subscriptions to researchers desirous of this content: it’s pretty affordable for serious book people.

**<http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/2013/02/reference/ereviews/reference-ereviews-february-15-2013/>**

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