



Finding Scientific Research (article no 2)

From the last RiEN newsletter you now know what research is and isn't. But how do you find it?

It is always useful to know what research has been carried out regarding reflexology in your own country, to do this you need to carry out a literature search of your specified topic/area of interest, to determine any previous positive or negative research published. It is important to define where you look however as there will be lots of information on the web that will not be of the same standard as described last time.

Where should your search begin? A large number of electronic databases now exist which greatly simplify the search process and enable you to access references and specific articles related to your area of research. Traditional print sources such as books, journals, directories etc. are obviously still useful, but the advent of the internet has made research information readily available from across the world.

Search engines There are many indexing and searching strategies employed by electronic databases to find what you are looking for on the world-wide web. This wide variety of access methods can prove to be tricky when attempting to isolate specific data on a specialist subject, and it can be rather like looking for a 'needle in a haystack'!

For instance, if you just entered: 'search for: "Reflexology"' in your internet service provider's 'Search Box' you could be presented with a thousand and one web sites which happen to have the term 'Reflexology' somewhere in the title e.g. books, merchandise, charts, organisations etc. Some of these sites may be of use, but most will not, and you could spend hours sifting through them all.

This is where subject search engines come in! By choosing an appropriate subject search engine you immediately pinpoint what you really want.

So search engines enable you to narrow-down your search to *only* include those areas of interest which match your research needs, and to enable you to by-pass the many thousands of sites that are totally irrelevant. The best search engines for finding scientific research into reflexology are the medical search engines or portals. These will be the ones that Doctors and scientists use but beware– not all will specifically recognise reflexology as a search term and you can receive a list of many thousands of irrelevant scientific papers.

In the UK we have a national library that holds all publications produced in the UK. This library, the British Library (<http://direct.bl.uk>) also recognises reflexology as a search term and so will provide a list of scientific research. This list has been the basis of the research list that the AoR holds for many years. Unfortunately, the electronic listing only holds up to 7 years worth of data and so inevitably the older titles fall off the end of the list. The AoR list has research going back to 1993 because we have been compiling it from the information available over the last 10 years.

Tips for finding research in your country

- Start today: the earlier you start the longer your list will be.
- Do you have a national library.
- Do they hold all publications?
- Can you access the scientific journals through the internet?
 - If so – try searching for reflexology
 - If you get a list of irrelevant research then reflexology is not recognised
 - If you get a list of relevant research – then look at the journals – *are they peer reviewed?*
 - If they are then well done! You have started your research list for your country.

If you don't have a national library then the search becomes more difficult. You may have to find specific journals that publish CAM research and just keep an eye on them for reflexology publications.

RiEN will be providing space on the website for the uploading of such lists in the near future. It would be great if you could get hold of the full study and get a translation of the research – like provided at the meeting last year of the German research. Buying research papers can be expensive however, especially if you download them from the internet. Again in the UK because we have the central library we can get our local libraries to order the research from the main one. It is a much cheaper but much slower method but it does mean we can get hold of the full research papers.