

Erowid Extracts

DOCUMENTING THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND PSYCHOACTIVES

June 2008

Number 14



*"A truly great library
contains something in it
to offend everyone."
— Jo Godwin*



Erowid Center • Summer of Poppies • Albert Hofmann in Memorium
Psychoactive Plants in Tantric Buddhism • Vaporizer Pipe

I've been an Erowid member for a couple of years now and seeing your request (in *Extracts*) for folks interested in becoming triagers I thought it would be a good opportunity to further my support. I've been a reader of these experience reports for longer than I can remember. I wish I could recall the first time I stumbled upon them. They are very important to me in that they compile a resource of communal experiences (and are often just plain good entertainment); but also more personally, they were what I had the most interest in when I first found Erowid as a dabbling-into-potentially-dangerous-situations kid. It was these reports that kept me coming back to Erowid, so that it held my interest long enough to become more than just a website I happened upon once. The experience reports kept me returning over time so that when I had matured a little in my attitudes towards and consumption of these substances (which Erowid also played a key role in, thank you) the rest of the site was able to unfold itself to me as the astounding resource of accurate information that it is. I'd like to help with the triaging of these reports to give back a little.

— MIKE THYS
Volunteer Form

I think your website is dangerous. I believe my 17-year-old son is using YOUR website to learn how he can get even higher and experiment with his current ADD medication. NOW, he can even more FUCKED up with your guidance...I think you suck.

— J.M.
Email to Erowid

I have children and this is the website I will send them to get educated on drugs, whenever that topic arises in their lives. Your information is top notch, as well as the "experiences" section which, despite what modern psychology says, is the purest and most concrete of all data, it's the human one, and thanks to your website, we can all gain wisdom from each other and connect as we should. Thanks, keep it up. [...]

— J.
Experience Vaults Feedback

I just want to say thank you for putting things like this on the Internet so that my 16-year-old can look them up and think that drinking 3 bottles of robotussin [sic] would be cool, even though it almost killed him. This website should be removed and you people should all be in jail for what you are promoting to kids. It is definitely for cases like this that the First Amendment should be revised. It just amazes me what people in this world will do just to make a buck.

— CONCERNED PARENT
Experience Vaults Feedback

It's definitely good that all of us at Erowid Center are getting rich from the project. (If anyone wonders, Erowid Center's staff have quite modest salaries, with no one paid more than \$45K per year.)

Ay, your site rocks btw! I've been coming here for the past eight years. There's no telling how many bad experiences or possible fatalities have been avoided thanks to the info I've obtained here. Keep up the good work!

— IKEAV
Experience Vaults Feedback

I came to use psychedelics later in life than possibly many people. The decision to use them was triggered by some general reading in the area, discussions with close friends who had personal experience and by an event in my life that required an expansion of my consciousness to fully assimilate and understand. They have transformed my life, as well as given a new depth to my scientific knowledge and reawakened my wonderment at the beauty and delicate complexity of nature that made me become a scientist in the first place. I have been writing personal accounts of my experience since I started using psychedelics and have been wondering for some time about ways of using my skills as a scientist and a writer to contribute to an increasing, and what I see as an essential, body of knowledge. I have a great admiration for Erowid and the quality of information that it provides, and I have frequently used and benefited from the site.

— C.M.
Volunteer Form

I am a 24-year-old male living in a sleepy village in the UK and I absolutely love The Vaults of Erowid. I recently became seriously ill with a very rare motor neuron type illness and have been bed-bound for roughly six months. During this dark time, Erowid has been a friend, teacher, and light for me and I feel, after having done some research, that I would really love to help you guys in any way I can. By offering my services I will be saying thanks for developing such an amazing website.

— H.C.
Volunteer Form

You have literarily saved my life! I was introduced to your website years ago and have just now realized how much good you do. Posting the real effects of many drugs has given me a better look at what I put into my body. When I was 12 years old, I started to get into the Rave scene. I eventually became a professional DJ and was introduced to acid which escalated to harder drugs. [...] I can't predict what I will do in my life, but I will say is that if it wasn't for your site [...] I would be dead, and that isn't an exaggeration. I have had so many close encounters with death that I am shocked I am still alive. That was before I found your site. When I was about 17 I realized I was able to learn more about the drugs I was putting in my body. I was able to know what to expect from them. Now I am 25 and have a major chronic back pain issue that my doctors are trying to figure out. I am taking many different painkillers and muscle relaxers and it is overwhelming to read about everyone's experiences on those medications. Thank you so much for being here; you are doing more good than you know. [...]

— ANONYMOUS
Email to Erowid

Send correspondence to:
extracts@erowid.org

Please include your name,
title, and city/state/country of origin
to be published with your letter.
Letters may be edited
for length and clarity.

Table of Contents

Letters & Feedback.....	☸
Recent News & Updates	2
Jon Hanna Joins Erowid Crew	2
Testing <i>Gymnopilus luteofolius</i>	2
EcstasyData and Google Ads.....	2
What To Reveal.....	3
The Vaporizer Pipe.....	4
Meet the Teafærie	5
Psychoactive Plants in Tantric Buddhism	6
Erowid Center.....	12
The Summer of Poppies (Opium Experience)	14
Erowid Visitor Micro-Surveys	16
Transcribing Dr. Shulgin's Lab Books.....	18
Albert Hofmann in Memorium.....	19
2008 World Psychedelic Forum	20
The Distillation.....	22

EROWID CENTER is a non-profit educational organization working to provide free, reliable and accurate information about psychoactive plants, chemicals, practices, and technologies.

The information on the site is a compilation of the experiences, words, and efforts of thousands of individuals including educators, researchers, doctors and other health professionals, therapists, chemists, parents, lawyers, and others who choose to use psychoactives. Erowid acts as a publisher of new information and as a library archiving documents published elsewhere. The collection spans the spectrum from solid peer-reviewed research to creative writing and fiction.

Subscriptions: To become a member and subscribe to *Erowid Extracts*, visit: <http://erowid.org/membership/>

Change of Address?: To update your mailing address, use the form at: https://erowid.org/donations/donations_update_address.php

Cancellations: To cancel your subscription, contact: extracts@erowid.org.

Reprints: To request permission to reproduce an article or image from this newsletter, contact: copyrights@erowid.org.

Advertising: *Erowid Extracts* does not accept advertisements, but if you would like to include a flier about a related organization or event in our mailings, contact: extracts@erowid.org.

Cover Image Credits: 1) Hofmann Blotter—Uriel5000; 2) *Datura stramonium*—Acidmon; 3) Vapor Genie—Erowid; 4) Guhyasamaja—Rubin Museum; 5) Cannabis Drawing—*Marijuana Medicine*, by Christian Rätsch; 6) *Papaver somniferum*—GBW; 7) *Gymnopilus luteofolius*—Erowid.

Erowid Extracts

Number 14, November 2008

Founder, Editor in Chief	Fire Erowid
Founder, Executive Editor	Earth Erowid
Managing Editor	Sylvia Thyssen
Contributing Editor	Jon Hanna
Contributing Editor	Lux
Art Curator	Christopher Barnaby
The Erowid Review	Erik Davis

Crew

Psilo, Stu, Bo, JL, Zhah, Embroglio, Scruff

Associate Editors

Zachawry

Report Reviewers & Triagers

• Antheia, Kernel, Zetetic, Biglo, Ben •
DreamStudy, Sparrow, Suave, Ratt, Peregrine,
Abrad, Ether, Killfoot, Scab13, Aqua, Hazy,
Bilz0r, Sugarmagnoliagirl, Smash, RevMeO,
Flowgnome, Node, Xoroth, SSC.

Erowid Extracts is the members' newsletter of Erowid Center. It has been published twice a year since May 2001. If you are interested in receiving this newsletter or supporting Erowid Center's educational mission, visit:

<http://erowid.org/donations/>

Past issues can be read online at:

<http://erowid.org/extracts/>

Erowid Center
P.O. Box 1116
Grass Valley, CA 95945
<http://www.erowid.org>
info@erowid.org

ISSN 1548-8071

© 2008 Erowid.org

Erowid is a ® Registered Trademark
All rights reserved

Know Your Body
Know Your Mind
Know Your Substance
Know Your Source

Recent News & Updates

Jon Hanna Joins Erowid Crew

We are excited that Jon Hanna has recently joined the Erowid crew. Jon is best known as the organizer of the Mind States conferences, but has also been a longtime contributor to *The Entheogen Review*, authored the *Psychedelic Resource List*, edited special issues of the *MAPS Bulletin*, and worked as a freelance editor and writer in this field for over fifteen years.

Jon has helped Erowid many times in the past, joining a few *Extracts* envelope-stuffing parties and providing editing consultation for various projects. We have always been impressed by his patience in fact checking, as well as his broad and deep knowledge about psychoactive plants and chemicals. He was also responsible for conceiving of and donating the "LSD 60" blotter art signed by Dr. Albert Hofmann, to be used as fundraising gifts to help support Erowid.

Jon brings to the project a passion for knowledge, excellent editorial skills, many connections to information resources, forthrightness in personal style, big-hearted generosity, and an unbridled sense of humor. Beyond his role as editor, Jon is helping to organize an Erowid Center presence at several events in 2008, as well as co-organizing a fundraising benefit in late June.

Erowid has an idiosyncratic work style, with no central office, and while it can be challenging to add a new crew member, we have high hopes that we will be able to integrate Jon smoothly and make good use of his skills. ●

Testing *Gymnopilus luteofolius*

At the December 2007 annual Fungus Fair held by the Mycological Society of San Francisco, volunteers brought in some nice dark rust-red samples of *Gymnopilus luteofolius* that they had collected in Marin County, California. These samples were positively identified as *G. luteofolius* by several mycologists in attendance. We received informal comments that it was a weakly active psilocybin-containing species of mushroom and the specimens seemed to show evident bluing.

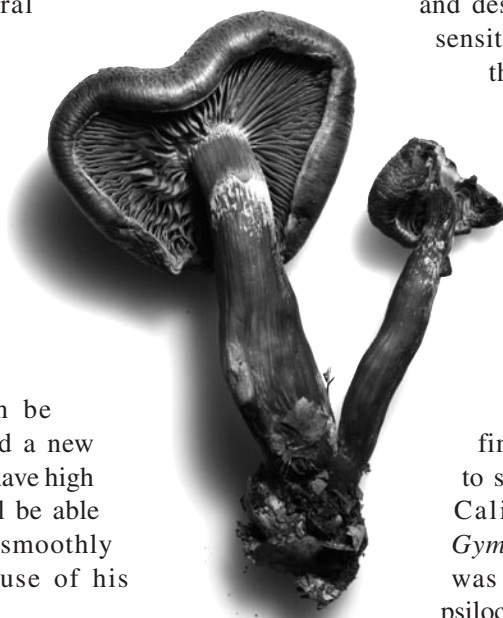
A brief literature search showed that little analysis has been done of this species and we found no analysis of samples from the west coast of the United States. We received a recommendation for Central Valley Toxicology (CVT) as a laboratory that could do analytical testing of the mushroom to determine whether there was any psilocybin or psilocin present.

We submitted two small cuttings to CVT, one from the cap and one from the stem. Using methanol as the solvent, they tested the material with LC/MS (liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry). The lab reported that they found no detectable

levels of psilocybin or psilocin in the *Gymnopilus luteofolius* samples

and described their testing sensitivity as "down into the picogram level", meaning that they would have been able to detect psilocybin or psilocin even if the amount present was less than one billionth of a gram.

Based on these findings, we are able to say that the Northern California sample of *Gymnopilus luteofolius* was not psilocybin- or psilocin-containing. ●



EcstasyData and Google Ads

EcstasyData.org, our street ecstasy lab testing project, has been without funding for nearly two and a half years, significantly reducing the number of tablets being tested. As an experiment, we ran Google ads on the EcstasyData site for a little over six months, intending to use the revenue to boost the project. These ads yielded about \$300 per month. Unfortunately, we received word from Google in early May 2008 that they have cancelled their AdSense service to EcstasyData.org because it violates their service policy: "As stated in our program policies, AdSense publishers are not permitted to place Google ads on sites with content related to prescription drugs, illicit drugs or drug paraphernalia, beer, hard alcohol, or tobacco."

Initially, we felt that Google's policies were unreasonable, but after looking into the issue, we have reconsidered. Many companies' rules around psychoactive-related content are strongly prohibitionist, disallowing advertising or other services only for content that is deemed to "promote" illegal drug use. Such policies allow those with a particular "anti-drug" viewpoint to advocate their message (often for free) while restricting groups with alternative viewpoints from using the services. Google's policy equally limits the serving of ads to all drug-related sites.

Google also appears to have applied these rules to the ads they serve on their own search results. Searching Google on a variety of psychoactive-related terms in May 2008 reveals that they appear to disallow advertising even on common words like beer and cannabis.

Although we are saddened that a possible funding opportunity for ecstasy tablet testing has closed, we are satisfied that, at this time, Google is taking a content-neutral stance on issues related to this controversial field. ●

What To Reveal...

THE CASE FOR DISCLOSING SUBSTANCE USE TO YOUR ER DOCTOR

Kavita Babu, MD — *Assistant Professor, Division of Medical Toxicology, Dept. of Emergency Medicine at University of Massachusetts*
Edward W. Boyer, MD, PhD — *Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine, University of Massachusetts Medical School*

The drowsy young woman presented to the emergency department after a motor vehicle collision; given her sleepiness, the staff of a walk-in clinic was concerned that she may have suffered a head injury and transferred her to a university center. She was very difficult to arouse, but could occasionally answer questions, and repeatedly denied any past medical history or medication use. Her boyfriend corroborated this, and the notes from the walk-in visit described administration of a substantial dose of meperidine (Demerol). After her head CAT scan was returned as normal, the patient's mental status seemed most consistent with opioid effect. Her doctors decided to administer a small dose of naloxone (0.2 mg) to reverse the meperidine, allowing for further examination of the patient. She woke up in florid opioid withdrawal and began vomiting profusely. When she was more alert, she revealed that she had been in methadone maintenance therapy for years, currently on a dose of 80 mg per day. Over the next several hours, her physicians treated her withdrawal symptomatically, until she was safe for discharge.

The emergency department (ED) represents an environment where multiple decisions are made within seconds to minutes. Providers are constantly assimilating information in a distracting, fast-paced arena where face time with patients is minimized and the potential for medical error is high. When specific information from patients regarding medication and self-prescribed or recreational substance use is withheld from physicians, patients are set up for adverse drug events ranging from the inconvenient to life-threatening.

The emergency department may be an extremely difficult venue for establishing the "therapeutic relationship". In most cases, your doctor is a stranger with his/her

own judgments brought to bear during your encounter. There is often little privacy available, and many providers may simply not ask about recreational substance use or dietary supplement use.

Patients may additionally fear repercussions of full disclosure, including reporting to law enforcement agencies, employers, or parents. However, federal law, and the code of "doctor-patient privilege", prevents physicians from

The information you provide may prevent costly, time-consuming, and potentially dangerous testing.

sharing this information unless a patient signs a consent form releasing their medical records, or the medical records are subpoenaed. One unusual exception to this rule (in some states) is in cases of demonstrated risk to the public health (for example, the driver who injures another person while intoxicated).

Many patients worry that insurance companies will be provided with information regarding any admitted use of illegal drugs, and that this may impact the future cost or availability of their health insurance. Unfortunately, the rules covering the sharing of this type of information with insurance companies can be complicated, and patients will almost certainly be asked to sign a release waiver allowing their hospital to share medical records with the insurance company as part of treatment. Further, insurance companies do require that customers release their medical records before they will make a payment for care rendered.

With all of these very real concerns in mind, we continue to make the case for full disclosure. Your physical health should be the first priority:

1) Communicating all pharmaceutical, dietary supplement, and recreational substance use to your physician puts the burden of safe medication administration on him/her. In the ED with chest pain? We would almost universally administer nitroglycerin. Recent Viagra use? Our routine may cause a life-threatening drop in blood pressure. Recent cocaine use may also affect our choice of blood pressure medications.

2) The information you provide may prevent costly, time-consuming, and potentially dangerous testing. If you present to the ED with an unexplained heart rate of 120, you will likely have extensive bloodwork and potentially have CAT scan imaging of your chest performed. While this is a relatively safe procedure, it involves chemical and radiation exposure that should not be undertaken unnecessarily. If you present with the same symptoms and mention your recent high-dose dextromethorphan use, your doctor can use that information to decide against the CAT scan in favor of careful observation and supportive care instead.

3) Revealing recreational drug use may help you get the appropriate treatment for your symptoms. A healthy 20-year-old man presents to the ED with a fever; the doctors will consider a variety of possibilities, many of which are related to viral infections. The same 20-year-old man who reveals a history of intravenous heroin use will have an extensive work-up for endocarditis, a potentially life-threatening bacterial infection of the heart valves.

We realize that many people may have had difficult experiences with the health care system regarding disclosure of their drug use to health care providers. However, we encourage readers not to put their health at risk by refusing to provide emergency department physicians with key information. ●

The Vaporizer Pipe

Flame-Powered Vaporizer Technology

by Earth Erowid

A novel, non-electric vaporizer became available in late 2003, sold as the “Vapor Genie”. It bears mentioning because the simplicity and effectiveness of this type of device could potentially increase vaporizer use and reduce smoking-related health issues for cannabis users.

What sets this vaporizer apart from previously available models is that it operates using the flame of a lighter as the heat source rather than an electric heating element, and the vaporizing process is much like that of smoking a traditional pipe.

Instead of applying the flame directly to plant material, which causes it to burn, the heat from the lighter is pulled through a porous ceramic filter. The filter allows air and heat to pass through, interrupting the flow of the flame and diffusing the heat.

It is perhaps easiest to picture with a step-by-step description of its use: The plant material is placed in the pipe’s bowl. (Like other vaporizers, this device works best with finely ground plant matter.) A spherical lid containing the ceramic filter is screwed onto the pipe above the bowl, enclosing the plant material in a chamber. The smoker applies the flame to a wide hole in the lid and slowly inhales, drawing the air through the ceramic filter,

the plant material, and the pipe, into their mouth. After approximately 3–6 seconds, the ceramic element heats up enough to transfer sufficient heat into the bowl to begin vaporizing the plant material’s volatile components. As the smoker feels the air entering their mouth become warm, or tastes the vaporized compounds, the flame is removed. The user continues to pull air through the pipe for another 3–6 seconds, during which time the volatile components are still being vaporized by the heated, flameless ceramic element.

As with a well-tuned electric vaporizer, when used properly and with quality cannabis, tobacco, or other smoking blends, the result is a fresh-tasting, nearly smokeless hit. The heaviest smoke results when the flame isn’t removed quickly enough, causing too much heat. In contrast to most other vaporizers, the main advantage of this type of device is that it is solid-state and portable, requiring no cord or electronic components.

The Vapor Genie feels sturdy and well built. The bowl is stainless steel and the body is wood (Ash). All parts of the pipe are reportedly made in the United States and assembled by the Vapor Genie staff.

While it is distinctly pipe-shaped, it is rather unusual looking with its bulbous lid atop the bowl. The filter is a silicon-carbide ceramic foam first created in the 1970s by NASA researchers looking for high-temperature fuel-mixing materials. The same ceramic is used to mix gases

for silicon chip manufacturing and fuel gases for military rockets. Dan Steinberg, the inventor of the Vapor Genie, describes that the “extremely tortuous path” that the air takes through the 3-D structure “causes turbulent mixing in which the air flows are broken apart and recombined multiple times” before emerging at a uniform temperature.

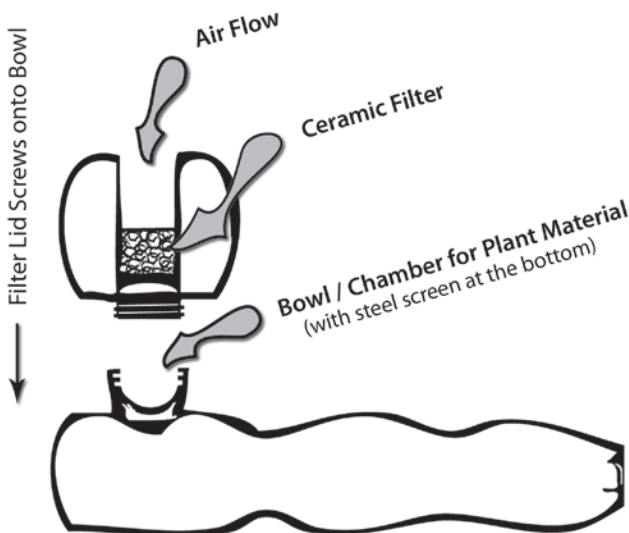
Perhaps the top complaints we’ve heard about the Vapor Genie are that

Adding a porous ceramic flame filter radically reduces inhaled soot and combustion products compared to using a simple pipe.

it takes some skill and attention to use properly and that the process of screwing the lid on can be difficult for those with poor dexterity. A simple improvement to this design would be an easier-to-use filter-to-bowl seating. The benefit of the sometimes-cumbersome screw-on lid is that the plant material is securely contained in the bowl and won’t spill if the unit is dropped or knocked over.

Other design possibilities spring to mind, including ceramic flame filters built to retrofit the standard bowls used in water pipes/bongs or “one-hitter” style straight pipes with magnetized ceramic filter attachments.

If used with cannabis, the Vapor Genie does not completely vaporize the volatile components: the remaining plant material still contains active cannabinoids. This partially depleted material could be used in cooking. Among cash-strapped and younger smokers, who are known to smoke ash and tars scraped from pipes and bongs to make use of every bit of available THC, incomplete cannabinoid delivery may reduce the pipe’s popularity. But for those concerned about health issues related to smoking, the Vapor Genie is a convenient and affordable vaporizing option. ●



MEET THE TEAFÆRIE

To Those Who Have Gone Before

Hi all! I'm the Teafærie. I've been an explorer of inner space for about fifteen years, and I often have the honor of serving as a sitter.

In the course of my work I've given a great deal of thought to what sort of ceremony, if any, is appropriate to incorporate with the use of psychoactive substances in our modern context. Many of us fancy ourselves, however naively, more savvy and sophisticated than our indigenous cousins, and in general the community that I work and play with tends to eschew theatrical rituals. In truth, I suspect that the so-called primitive practitioners who employ those types of technologies are no less pragmatic than we, making a big show and laying it on with a trowel when necessary to catalyze group consciousness, but generally setting aside the costume jewelry amongst themselves in favor of simple solidarity in the face of the mysterious unknown. Through my own experimentation, I've found that nothing can really prepare me much better than feeling at home and maintaining a slightly ironic sense of humor.

On the other hand, there's something that feels just a bit cocky—if not perilously blasé—about going at it willy-nilly, sans even an acknowledgment of the depth and intensity of the undertaking.

So to kick off my new column on Erowid I'll share a little something that I sometimes like to say before things get rolling. Borrow, add, adjust, enjoy!

A toast (throws toast) originally composed in March of Aught Seven, for my frequent co-pilot, second, and most excellent good friend Seuss Dean upon the occasion of a 5-MeO-DMT experience on the island of Koh Chang, Thailand:

*To those who have gone before!
To the explorers of the last Great Sea; true heroes all, sink or swim.
To the self-elect: shamans, adventurers, visionaries, and madmen alike.
To the courageous and to the curious.
To the persecuted and to the lost.
To all of the exiles who have dared to climb the garden wall.
To the holy fools, the seekers, the ambassadors, and the pioneers.
To those who have had the temerity to storm Heaven and Hell,
and who have returned with the Secret Fire to light our way.
To those who can never remember, and to those who can never forget.
To all of the intrepid and extraordinary spirits who have played at the edge,
We, who prepare to confront the Mystery, salute you.*

—Teafærie



Artifact, by CJD

Psychoactive Plants in Tantric Buddhism

Cannabis and Datura Use in Indo-Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism

by R. C. Parker and Lux

This article represents a fairly comprehensive survey of references to datura and cannabis in Indo-Tibetan tantric Buddhist texts that have been translated into English. The online version includes more Tibetan and Sanskrit transliterations, links to referenced articles, and additional related material. See Erowid.org/extracts/n14/tantra. The authors wish to thank Professor David B. Gray and Professor Geoffrey Samuel for their encouragement and many helpful suggestions.

Since the beginning of modern discourse about psychedelics in American intellectual culture, seminal authors have noted parallels between psychedelic experiences and contemplative practices of Asia. In his 1954 essay *The Doors of Perception*, Aldous Huxley likened his experience of mescaline to the insights precipitated by yoga and meditation. Author R. Gordon Wasson went further, arguing that some spiritual disciplines of India may be intended to evoke an experience that was originally entheogenic in nature.¹

By the late 1960s, counterculture rhetoric strongly associated psychedelics and Eastern mysticism.

Alan Watts tackled the topic in his 1962 book *The Joyous Cosmology*; Timothy Leary, Ram Dass, and Ralph Metzner later wrote a guide to psychedelic experiences based on the fourteenth-century tantric manual *Bardo Thödol*, the so-called *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.²

Psychedelic experience and Eastern meditation have become so intertwined in Western culture that their roots are difficult to disentangle. Fortunately, in recent years several thoughtful book chapters and articles have appeared examining the complex relationship between the explosion of psychedelic counterculture and the contemporaneous popularization of Buddhism in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.³

Unfortunately, the history of psychoactive plant use by Buddhists in Asia has not been addressed with comparable rigor. Although interesting speculative work has been written on the subject,^{4,5} a focused analysis of explicit textual evidence has not been published. Over the last few decades, university religious studies departments have produced translations of Buddhist tantric texts of unprecedented

quality, providing ample material for an examination of psychoactive plant use by Buddhists in Asia. This article considers some of the evidence with respect to tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet, focusing on the use of cannabis and datura.

[...] seminal authors have noted parallels between psychedelic experiences and contemplative practices of Asia.

Tantric Buddhism

The term “tantra” refers to a great many religious practices and beliefs. It is so difficult to define, that some religious historians argue the word has little meaning other than to mark extreme or taboo practices.⁶ The Sanskrit word and its Tibetan equivalent (*rgyud*) refer to the texts that form the scriptural basis for the religious movement, and also mean “continuum” or “lineage”.

Despite the difficulty in pinning down the term, different tantric lineages generally share some characteristics. Practices and scriptures are often secret, with instructions given in private by teachers to students with whom they have consecrated a formal guru/disciple relationship. Tantric practices must often be authorized by empowerment ceremonies, which sometimes last for days or weeks and may carry lifelong practice commitments as a condition of receiving them.



Cakrasamvara, Tibet House Museum

Most tantric scriptures are practice-oriented texts associated with specific deities. Tantric meditation and ritual often involve complex visualizations of these deities—so much so that the Tibetan polymath Tsong Khapa (1357–1419) proposed “deity yoga” as the defining characteristic of tantra.⁷ Many tantric yogas are intended to elicit extraordinary states of consciousness, including sexual yoga with real or visualized partners and energy yogas that manipulate body heat, respiration, or dreaming. However, the concept of tantra as a sex-positive religion devoted to embracing the material world is a modern construction that bears little resemblance to the historical tantric practices and beliefs of Asia.⁸

Tantra began to take shape as a major religious movement in India between the sixth and ninth centuries CE.^{9,10} Many of the extant tantric texts were written in these years and the movement reached a peak that lasted several centuries. Most tantras were composed in Sanskrit in India and Central Asia, and were eventually exported to China and Tibet.

During 950–1200 CE, Tibet underwent a period of upheaval followed by a “renaissance”, in which the old Tibetan empire collapsed and reorganized into a society ruled by a complex network of powerful clans and religious institutions.¹¹ During this renaissance, enormous resources and labor were devoted to painstakingly translating Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Tibetan. The Tibetan written language had been developed during the seventh century by a committee of religious scholars specifically for the purpose of translating scriptures from Sanskrit.¹² Many Buddhist tantras that are lost in their original Sanskrit forms still exist in the Tibetan scriptural canon.

Why Look to Tantra?

There are several reasons to look to tantra for psychoactive substance use in pre-modern Buddhist Asia. The first and most important is that non-tantric monastic Buddhism is far less tolerant of violations of scriptural precepts than tantric Buddhism. Buddha’s injunction against consuming intoxicants precludes the open use of psychoactive substances by members of the Buddhist monastic establishment. In

contrast, tantric Buddhism can allow for, and even applaud, shocking transgressions as a sign that the yogi has transcended ordinary patterns of valuation and behavior.

While non-tantric Buddhist practice was overwhelmingly the purview of ordained monks and nuns in medieval India, the *tāntrika*, or practitioner of tantra, was often a layperson.

A mainstay of tantric literature is the *siddha*, a sorcerer-like yogi who achieves extraordinary powers such as flight or psychic abilities through religious practice. Unlike the introverted monk quietly seeking liberation behind monastery walls, the *siddha* expresses spiritual attainment in the world. In their biographies, tantric *siddhas* often commit outrageous acts of apparently reckless violence, consumption of intoxicants, or sexual conduct.¹³ In one famous legend, the guru *Hādīpā* of the *Nāth siddha* lineage is said to have broken a five-year fast by consuming enormous quantities of cannabis, *Strychnos nux-vomica* (*Kucila*, the “strychnine tree”), and datura.¹⁴

In addition to accommodating the use of psychoactives, tantric texts sometimes include encyclopedic instructions for the use of medicinal plants. Ayurvedic medicine and yoga are two important antecedents to tantra,⁹ and those disciplines provide a template for simultaneously developing both body and mind in the service of liberation.¹⁵ This holistic approach to spiritual practice is preserved in several important Buddhist tantras in which physical, mental, and spiritual ailments form a single complex of related concerns that must be treated in tandem. This approach is an easy rhetorical fit with pre-tantric Buddhist scriptures, which sometimes describe Buddha as a doctor and suffering as an illness.¹⁶ Consequently, some Buddhist tantras include compendious information about medicinal plants, including cannabis and datura.



Datura stramonium, Photo by Acidmon

Datura in Buddhist Tantra

Both *Datura stramonium* and *Datura metel* are well-documented in India and Tibet. In Sanskrit datura is known as *dhattūra*, while in Tibetan the plant is *da dhu ra*. Datura’s effects were described in several ayurvedic *materia medica*. It is mentioned in the *Kāmasūtra* (ca. 4th–6th century CE), which says: “If food be mixed with the fruit of the thorn apple (dathura) it causes intoxication”.¹⁷ It also advises a man to anoint his penis with honey infused with datura and long peppers (*pippali* = *Piper lungum*) before sexual intercourse to make his partner “subject to his will”.¹⁷

[...] tantric *siddhas* often commit outrageous acts of apparently reckless violence, consumption of intoxicants, or sexual conduct.

Datura is associated with several Hindu and Buddhist deities. *Vāmana Purāṇa*, a pre-modern devotional text dedicated to Vishnu (date unknown), tells that datura sprouted from the chest of the god Śiva.¹⁸ Its flowers are used as ceremonial offerings—a practice that continues to this day in Nepal.¹⁸ Wrathful

deities in tantric Buddhism are said to be fond of datura,¹⁹ which is sometimes used as a ritual offering to placate these deities.¹⁹ References to datura in the pre-eleventh century *Vajramahabhairava Tantra* have been used to argue on behalf of an Old World origin of *Datura metel*.²⁰

This compound “becomes an ointment for the eyes. After applying it one revolves around and around like a bee.”

The psychoactive effects of datura have long been recognized in Tibet. The religious author Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158) used the effects of datura to illustrate how our senses can be distorted, writing: “When datura [...] is eaten, appearances manifest as yellow.”²¹ The third Dodrup Chen Rinpoche (1865–1926), a Tibetan scholar-yogi, compares a cryptic “nectar rendering liberation” to the power of datura. He writes, “[I]f one takes the nectar by itself the [subtle body] will receive blessings spontaneously and excellent accomplishments will be achieved, like being intoxicated by alcohol [...] and being deluded with visions by Datura or thorn apple [...]”.²²

Datura intoxication may have been widespread in *siddha* culture. In *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, Ronald M. Davidson observes:

[M]any of the *siddha* scriptures discuss ointments and drugs, especially those applied to the eyes or feet. The use of the various species of datura (especially [*Datura metel*]) is particularly evident. Sometimes termed the “crazy datura” (*unmattadhatura*) or “Śiva’s datura,” it was generally employed as a narcotic paste or as wood in a fire ceremony and could be easily absorbed through the skin or the lungs.¹⁰

The use of datura in various rites is prescribed by a number of seminal tantras that exerted a profound influence on Indian and Tibetan religious culture. Most of the known datura references pertain to magico-religious rites of attack intended

to cause enemies to go insane, to destroy their wealth, or to drive them away.

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (ca. 8th century CE) is generally considered one of the earliest extant Buddhist tantras.⁶ This key scripture describes the basic architecture of tantric practice and is venerated by several schools of Tibetan Buddhism—particularly the Gelukpas, who take it as the central tantra.²³ In the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, Buddha Vajradhara gives instructions for undertaking the destruction of evil-doers:

[M]aking an image of the enemy with the excrement and urine of those who follow the great Dharma, wrathfully burn it in a fire of thorn-wood, and even the Buddha will certainly perish. [...] So he said black mustard-seeds, salt, oil, poison, and thorn-apple [datura], these are taught as the supreme destroyers of all the Buddhas.²⁴

Similarly, the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* (ca. late 8th century CE) is highly venerated in Tibet to this day. It states: “Should the well-equipped one immolate mustard oil with crows’ wings and [the victim’s name] in a *datura* fire, he will immediately be expelled or killed.”²⁵

The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* also tells that a *tāntrika* can drive an enemy insane using magical implements, including a charnel ground cloth bound around the “five intoxicants”. The Tibetan commentator Budön Rinchen Drup explains that “five intoxicants” refers to the root, stem, leaves, flower, and fruit of the datura plant²⁵—all of which contain psychoactive alkaloids.¹⁸ In another reference to datura, the tantra claims that immolating “one hundred and eight golden fruits” (*kanakaphala*, explicated as “datura fruit” by the commentator Jayabhadra) will allow one to become insubstantial.²⁵

The *Vajramahabhairava Tantra* (ca. 10th century CE) contains instructions for killing an enemy saying that the practitioner should perform a rite: “naked, with disheveled hair and facing south, draw the sixteen-section wheel of *Vajramahabhairava* [...] on a shroud in venom, blood, salt, black mustard, *nimba*

(*Azadirachta indica*) and *Datura* juice using a pen made from a raven feather or from human bone.”²⁰

This tantra also provides instructions for using the ash of datura wood to magically break a relationship between a man and woman, or to drive people away.²⁰ Datura fruit may be used in magical rituals to drive an enemy insane:

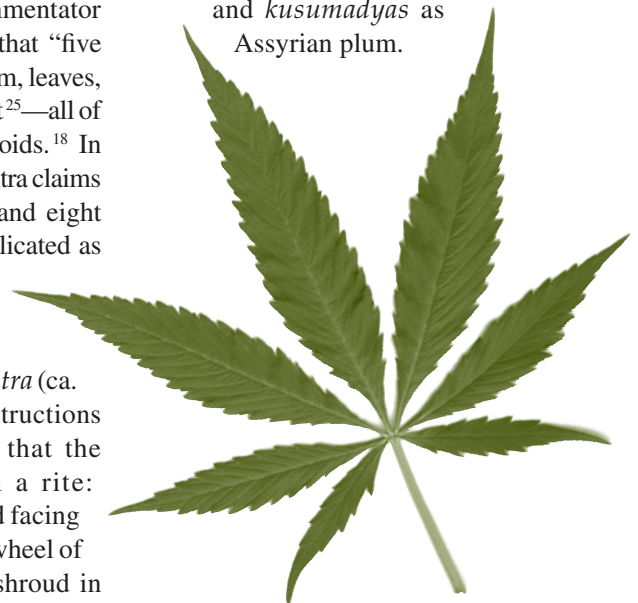
[...]The practitioner] takes *Datura* fruit and, mixing it with human flesh and worm-eaten sawdust, offers it in food or drink. He recites the mantra and that person will instantly go insane and then die within seven days.²⁰

and to destroy wealth:

Then if, wanting to turn wealth into poverty, [he] performs a hundred and eight burnt offerings at night in a fire of cotton using *Datura* fruit, (that wealth) will indeed become trifling.²⁰

Datura was sometimes included in ritual fire offerings that may have produced psychoactive smoke. A key eleventh century commentary on the *Kālachakra Tantra* by *Puṇḍarīka* describes: “When the oblation is offered in the octagonal pot, [on a fire made] with *arka* faggots, with thorn-apples [datura] and *kusumadyas* offered into the fire, it accomplishes stupefactions [of the enemy] [...]”.²⁶ *Arka* has been identified as milkweed

and *kusumadyas* as Assyrian plum.



Cannabis Leaf, Image by Tganja

The *Mahākāla Tantra* (ca. 8th–12th century CE) contains extensive *materia medica* and magical instructions. In chapter twelve, “On Ointments”, it instructs practitioners to harvest datura and two other plants, and mix them with the bile of a black cat and honey. This compound “becomes an ointment for the eyes. After applying it one revolves around and around like a bee.”¹⁶

In a similar vein, tantra historian Ronald Davidson notes that the use of datura in tantric rituals “may have something to do with the *siddha* fascination with flying or perhaps inform[s] their iconography, for a common report from the use of datura is the sensation of aerial transport or the feeling of being half-man and half-animal.”¹⁰

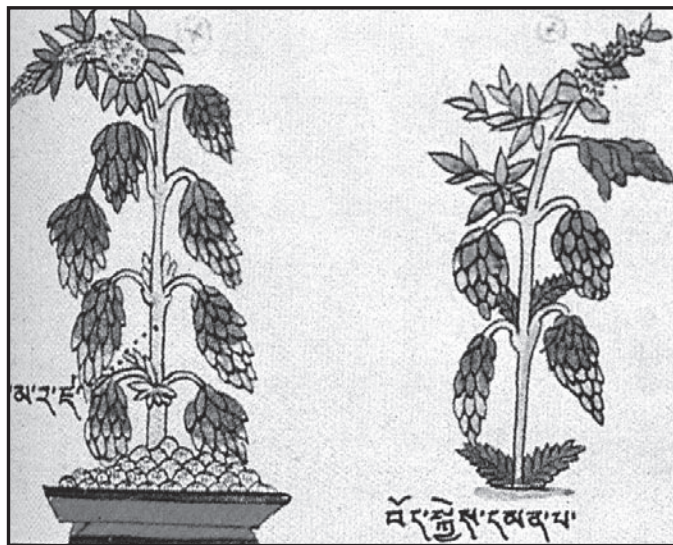
The *Mahākāla Tantra* also offers instructions to find lost treasure by creating a magical pill that includes datura:

After having ground the following medicines one should make pills: the seed grain of *khoḍiyā*, the seed of sesbania, the juice of the leaf of the waved-leaf fig tree, the juice of *Villarsia cristata*, the powder of the regurgitation of cow, the juice of Śiva’s intoxicant [= datura], the juice of the root of the wormseed and onion leaf together with the bile of a snake and honey which has been kept under the ground. When two days [have] gone by, at a cool time (of the day) one should anoint (the eyes) and one will see a hole in the ground.¹⁶

The fourth chapter of *Kṛṣṇa-yāmari* (ca. 10th century) gives instructions for a wrathful ritual visualization in which the yogi makes “the index finger red with the resins from the thorn-apple leaves and also the seeds of [datura].”²⁶

Cannabis in Buddhist Tantra

Like datura, cannabis has a long history in Asia. Scholars have argued that cannabis may have been first cultivated in China in Neolithic times²⁷ and the plant has been well-known throughout India, Nepal, and Tibet for millennia. Cannabis is referred to in the *Vedas* as “source of happiness” and “liberator.”²⁷



Cannabis Drawing, from *Marijuana Medicine* by Rātsch

Perhaps the earliest-known literary reference to cannabis appears in the Hindu scripture *Satapatha Brahmana* (ca. 800 BCE).²⁸ Cannabis also appears in an early medicinal work, the *Sushruta Samhita* (written sometime between 400 BCE and 600 CE) as an antiphlegmatic.²⁷ In early works of Ayurveda, cannabis is said to “increase gastric fire”, i.e., digestion and appetite.²⁷ Vaṅgasena’s *Compendium of the Essence of Medicine*, an eleventh-century Bengali medicinal text, describes cannabis (*bhanga*) as “a drug like opium” and prescribes it as a medicine to enhance longevity.²⁹

Like datura, cannabis has been prominently associated with the Hindu god Śiva since ancient times. Cannabis plays an important role in some Hindu tantra lineages, where it may have been used during tantric rites to help adepts overcome their aversions to taboo-breaking religious practices.^{29,30} In the *Mahāyāna* tradition, Buddha is said to have subsisted for six years of ascetic practice on nothing but hemp seeds.³¹

Tantra scholar David Gordon White notes that cannabis use was a widespread part of the influential *Nāth siddha* lineage.⁹ Additionally, he notes that in the Buddhist *Tārā Tantra*, cannabis is “essential to ecstasy.”⁹ In that tantra,

Buddha says that drinking wine without having consumed cannabis “cannot produce real ecstasy”.³² In this context “ecstasy” is a technical term describing the experience of bliss caused by particular yogic achievements, and an important step in becoming enlightened.

Cannabis serves a magico-medicinal function in several major tantras. Including its datura references described above, much of the *Mahākāla Tantra* concerns the search for the “perfect medicine”, a psycho-spiritual elixir that will transform the body and mind in the service of liberation.¹⁷ This lineage extols the use of medicinal herbs (*ausadhi*) to achieve “attainments” or “powers”.

Forty-two of the *Mahākāla Tantra*’s fifty chapters include formulas for using medicinal plants, and many of these plants

Like datura, cannabis has been prominently associated with the Hindu god Shiva since ancient times.

are psychoactive. A partial list includes plants that have been identified as *Acorus calamus*, *Areca catechu*, *Artemisia* spp., *Cannabis sativa*, *Cinnamomum camphora*, *Datura metel*, *Myristica fragrans*, *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Peganum harmala*, and *Valeriana wallichii*. The plants are employed to attain health, wealth, wisdom,



Cannabis & Sexual Tantra

Anthropologist Christian Ratsch has argued that cannabis is used in tantric sexual yoga, pointing out centuries of belief about its sexual effects in Asia.^{27,28} However, because Ratsch focuses on the Hindu/Buddhist syncretic tantric culture of Nepal, relying primarily on Hindu sources for textual support,³⁶ the relevance of his findings to historical Buddhist tantra is unclear.

and supernatural powers such as seeing underground and flying. These formulas include cannabis in several different forms, including leaves, resin, and other plant material.¹⁷ Given its inclusion in the “perfect medicine” formulas of the *Mahākāla Tantra*, cannabis may perhaps be considered a significant part of this tantric lineage.

The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* (described in the datura section above) also

[...] Buddha says that drinking wine without having consumed cannabis “cannot produce real ecstasy”.

emphasizes the magico-medical role of cannabis, stating that a particular mixture of compounds including cannabis will help one “become a yogin who does what he pleases and stays anywhere whatsoever.”²⁵ The translator notes that all the plants in this recipe are edible, and this formula may therefore refer to the preparation of material for oral consumption, possibly as “*siddhi*-pills”.

Discussion

While ample textual evidence exists to establish that cannabis and datura have appeared in some Buddhist tantras, the relative importance placed on psychoactive plants in Buddhism remains an open question. In his discussion of psychoactive plants in the *Mahākāla Tantra*, William George Stablein argues that the use of psychoactive plants in Buddhism may constitute an entheogenic tradition, writing:

To the extent that the [*Mahākāla Tantra*] speaks for itself it is clear that what we are calling Tantric medicine includes pharmacologically induced experiences that could indeed be called religious. This may indicate a unique transmission of Buddhist Tantra that is not unlike the psychedelic phenomenon in the New World shamanism and the Vedic rite.¹⁶

While it is natural to assume that any ritual involving datura or cannabis would capitalize on the plants’ psychoactivity, both plants were associated with important deities for many centuries before any tantras were written. They may have been valued for their symbolic importance rather than for their effects.

In the case of datura, many of the references do not clearly direct the yogi to ingest the plant material. For example, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Cakrasamvara Tantra*, and the *Vimalaprabhā* of *Puṇḍarīka* specify that datura is to be burned. While it is possible that the smoke from such a fire would be psychoactive if inhaled, it may not have been part of the ritual to inhale the smoke.

Ronald Davidson claims that the smoke of datura fire offerings was indeed psychoactive: “[it] was generally employed as a narcotic paste or as wood in a fire ceremony and could be easily absorbed through the skin or the lungs.”¹⁰ In support of this position, it is worth noting that

Gustav Schenk described experiencing profound psychoactive effects after inhaling smoke from an unknown number of henbane seeds, which contain some of the same psychoactive alkaloids as datura, although in lesser concentrations.³³ Schenk also describes datura smoke as psychoactive.³³

There is textual evidence that datura’s psychoactive effects may have played a part in some tantric rituals. The *Mahākāla Tantra* says the yogi who applies a datura ointment will “revolve like a bee”. Parts of the datura plant are referred to in the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* as “the five intoxicants”. The *Vajramahabhairava Tantra* may be saying that if you put datura in someone’s food, they will go insane.

Were psychoactive plants regarded as helpful for achieving liberation? The *Tārā Tantra* seems to say so; the scripture quotes Buddha as saying that wine without cannabis will not produce “ecstasy”, a key attainment in the technique of subtle energy yoga that it describes.^{9,32} However, the *Tārā Tantra* is a relatively minor scripture and did not exert a strong influence on Buddhist religious culture.

The value placed on psychoactive plants is less clear in the more important tantras. The datura references found in the *Guhyasamāja* and *Cakrasamvara Tantras* pertain to magico-religious rites that may be useful, but would probably not be considered essential to the attainment of liberation by most Buddhists.

Geoffrey Samuel, author of several books and essays on Buddhist religious culture, suggests that the use of psychoactive plants in the Indian *siddha* cultural milieu may have been similar to current use observed among modern itinerant ascetics (*sadhus*) in Asia.³⁴ Such use has been documented throughout the Himalayas, where the plants are consumed by *sadhus* for a variety of goals, including healing, recreation, and yoga.³⁵ Given its large number of applications, it may indeed be that cannabis was regarded by *sadhus* and *siddhas* of medieval India as a useful tool.

The Stablein thesis that a strong parallel exists between psychoactive plant use in Tibet and in New World entheo-shamanism, however, appears to go beyond the available evidence. While psychoactive plants are included in Tibetan

recipes for alchemical elixirs and sacred medicines, Samuel proposes that such use was “not aiming at the more dramatic transformations of consciousness with which we are familiar when looking at the use of entheogens in other cultures.”³⁴

Even in the paradigmatic entheogen-using traditions of Meso- and South America, it can be difficult to make a clear distinction between “worldly” and “spiritual” use. Ayahuasca in South America and psilocybin-containing mushrooms in Mexico have been used to treat illnesses and perform magical feats such as locating lost objects—does this disqualify the traditions from being considered entheogenic? Surely not. Given

[...] it may indeed be appropriate to call Buddhist use of psychoactive plants entheogenic.

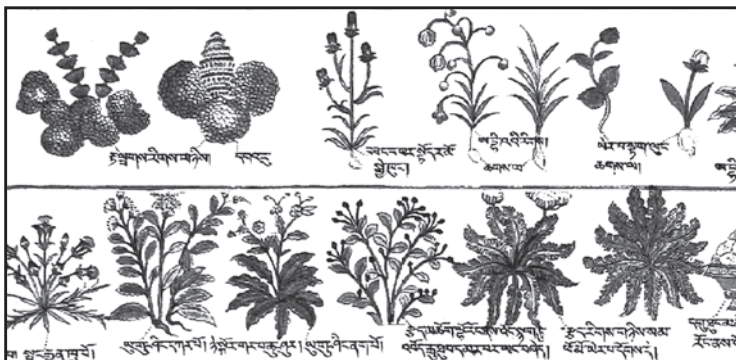
the complex motivations and interests that drive use of entheogens the world over, it may indeed be appropriate to call Buddhist use of psychoactive plants entheogenic. However, while the ayahuasca vine is venerated by the ayahuasca cults of South America, it is much less clear that any Buddhist tradition has venerated the use of psychoactive plants to a comparable degree. Entheogens may have been viewed as important in some tantric sects, but the available textual evidence is not sufficient to establish that the use of these plants was regarded as a central part of spiritual practice for most *tāntrikas* of India and Tibet. ●

References

1. Wasson RG. *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*. Harcourt. 1972.
2. Leary T, Metzner R, Alpert R. *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Citadel. 1964.
3. Badiner AH, Grey A. *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics*. Chronicle Books LLC. 2002.
4. Crowley M. “Secret Drugs of Buddhism.” E-published in *Earthrites Magazine*. Accessed Apr 9, 2008; http://earthrites.org/magazine_article_drugplants_crowley.htm.
5. Hajicek-Dobberstein S. “Soma Siddhas and Alchemical Enlightenment: Psychedelic Mushrooms in Buddhist Tradition”. *J Ethnopharmacol*. Oct 1995;48(2):99–118.
6. Urban HB. *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion*. University of California Press. 2003.
7. Dalai Lama HH (Tenzin Gyatso), Tsong-kha-pa, Hopkins PJ. *Tantra in Tibet*. Snow Lion Publications. 1987.
8. White DG. *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric Sex” in its South Asian Contexts*. University of Chicago Press. 2006.
9. White DG. *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions of Medieval India*. University of Chicago Press. 1996. p 19,118–9,412.
10. Davidson RM. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. Columbia University Press. 2003. p 201.
11. Davidson RM. *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*. Columbia University Press. 2005.
12. Snellgrove D, Richardson H. *A Cultural History of Tibet*. Frederick A. Paeger, Inc. 1968.
13. Abhayadatta. *Buddha’s Lions: Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*. trans. by James B. Robinson. Dharma Publishing. 1997.
14. Bhattacharyya B. *An Introduction to Buddhist Esotericism*. Oxford University Press. 1931. p 73.
15. Fields GP. *Religious Therapeutics: Body*

and Health in Yoga and Ayurvedic Medicine. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hawaii. 1994.

16. Stablein WG. *The Mahākālatantra: A Theory of Ritual Blessings and Tantric Medicine*. Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University. 1976. p 21–2,80,255–6,36,286,5.
17. Vātsyāyana. *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana*. trans. Richard Burton. Modern Library. 2002. p 188,181.
18. Rātsch C. *Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants*. Park Street Press. 2005. p 204,204,203.
19. De Nebesky-Wojkowitz R. *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*. Book Faith India. 1996. p 346,489.
20. Siklós B. “Datura Rituals in the Vajramahabhairava-tantra”. *Curare*. 1993;16(2):71–76. p 73,74,73,73.
21. Stearns C. *Taking the Result as the Path: Core Teachings of the Sakya Lamdré Tradition*. Wisdom Publications. 2006. p 432.
22. Thondup Rinpoche T. *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*. Wisdom Publications. 1997. p 152–3.
23. Cozort D. *Highest Yoga Tantra: An Introduction to the Esoteric Buddhism of Tibet*. Snow Lion Publications. 1986. p 13.
24. Fremantle F. *A Critical Study of the Guhyasamāja Tantra*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of London. 1971. p 103.
25. Gray DB. *The Cakrasamvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka): A Study and Annotated Translation*. The American Institute of Buddhist Studies. 2007. p 371,352,362,373–4.
26. Hartzell, JF. *Tantric Yoga: A Study of the Vedic Precursors, Historical Evolution, Literatures, Cultures, Doctrines, and Practices of the 11th Century Kaśmīri Śaivite and Buddhist Unexcelled Tantric Yogas*. Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University. 1997. p 1270,363.
27. Touw M. “The Religious and Medicinal Uses of Cannabis in China, India and Tibet.” *J Psychoactive Drugs*. 1981 Jan–Mar;13(1):23–34. p 24,25,28,28,28.
28. Rātsch C. *Plants of Love*. Ten Speed Press. 1997. p 82,86,82.
29. Wujastyk D. “Cannabis in Traditional Indian Herbal Medicine”. In Ana Salema (ed.), *Ayurveda at the Crossroads of Care and Cure*. Proceedings of the Indo-European Seminar on Ayurveda held at Arrábida, Portugal, in November 2001. 2002. p 45–73.
30. Bharati, A. *The Tantric Tradition*. Rider & Co. 1965.
31. Rātsch C. *Marijuana Medicine*. Healing Arts Press. 2001. p 45.
32. Maitra AK (ed.). *Tārātantra*. Varendra Res. Soc. 1983.
33. Schenk G. *The Book of Poisons*. trans. by Michael Bullock. Rinehart. 1955. p 44,73.
34. Samuel G. Personal Communication. 2008.
35. Müller-Ebeling C, Rātsch C, Shahi SB. *Shamanism and Tantra in the Himalayas*. Inner Traditions. 2002.
36. Aldrich MR. “Tantric Cannabis Use in India”. *J Psychoactive Drugs*. 1977;9(3):227–233.



Medical Thangka, from SD Rubin Foundation

Erowid Center

Approved as a U.S. Non-Profit Educational Organization

by Earth and Fire Erowid

As of January 1, 2008, Erowid.org is now managed by a non-profit educational organization named Erowid Center. The shift to operating as an IRS-approved charity brings some changes for members and crew, and for the future of the project.

What this means to Erowid members is that donations to Erowid Center are tax deductible for those in the United States who itemize or are otherwise able to deduct charitable contributions. It also means that our basic financial records are public. We will file yearly disclosures listing the total value of donations received, though only the names of major contributors (those giving approximately \$5,000 and more) must be shared with the IRS, information that is already provided to the IRS by those who wish to claim a tax deduction. We will also make public the salaries of Erowid Center's officers and highest paid employees, major expenses, per-project expenses, etc. Otherwise, since we've always operated Erowid in a non-profit model, most financial issues will remain the same for members and donors.

Erowid Center's Mandate

As specified in our IRS-approved application, "The goal of Erowid Center is to improve the quality and quantity of available information regarding psychoactive plants, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, technologies, and religious, spiritual, and cultural practices. 'Psychoactives' are things that affect the brain and mind. There is a wide variety of psychoactives commonly available in the world, including such diverse things as caffeine in coffee, prescription antide-

pressants, illegal drugs such as cannabis, spiritual practices such as meditation, and new technologies such as direct neural stimulation."

For the project, becoming a non-profit is largely about improving the organizational foundations to build stability over time. We feel strongly that Erowid deserves a solid long-term outlook. We want to help ensure that—whatever psychoactive-related information needs there are in future years—Erowid continues to be able to bring well-edited, well-researched, and diverse community viewpoints to the discussion. As part of this process, we have formed a board of directors and a "council of electors" who elect the board on a yearly basis. This organizational structure provides mechanisms for oversight and handling unexpected situations.

What 501(c)(3) Status Brings

Hand in hand with additional fiscal accountability comes a level of institutional legitimacy. This official legitimacy is one of the primary reasons we decided to brave the laborious process of forming a non-profit. Although we have worked

hard over the past twelve years to develop trust with our members, visitors, and the many experts with whom we work, it has become clear that new opportunities

The Erowid Expert Network will be a moderated, reviewed network of both trained and self-taught experts who are available for consulting, or for acting as resources for media, publishers, educators, and others.

become available if we are able to build formalized relationships with professionals and professional organizations. Our new structure provides a more public and institutionally recognized validity as a resource and reference, and as an organization.

Importantly, our new non-profit status also helps Erowid's long-term financial stability. It makes Erowid Center eligible for a large number of grants that are restricted to approved non-profits, opens opportunities to benefit from corporate matching programs, will likely increase donations because of tax-deductibility, and allows us to accept tax-deductible donations of library materials and hardware.

While we are concerned that institutional legitimacy could be a double-edged sword, possibly alienating the most anti-establishment elements of our core constituency, we hope we can work to maintain trust through our activities, choices of staff, and continued recognition that the

- Oct 1995 — Erowid.org website founded
- Jul 2005 — Erowid Center founded
- Oct 2007 — Erowid Center receives IRS approval as a 501(c)(3) non-profit
- Jan 2008 — Erowid Center begins operations

members of the general public who use psychoactives, legally or not, are often the true experts on the subjects Erowid covers.

Why Erowid “Center”?

We have chosen the name “Erowid Center” to highlight the role we play as a hub for information sharing between the groups that make up our visitors, volunteers, and related organizations. Erowid has always worked to bridge the divides that separate the diverse types of people who have important insights and knowledge about psychoactives. We believe that expanding on this role is key to the core Erowid mission.

Erowid Expert Network (EEN)

With the formation of Erowid Center, we are entering a new phase of community building around the publication and dissemination of psychoactive information. Over the last twelve years, we have built relationships with a great number of people who are incredibly knowledgeable about one or more aspects of psychoactives and the publication and collection of information. One of the top opportunities we see with reforming Erowid as a non-profit is to formalize these relationships into a moderated, reviewed network of both trained and self-taught experts. The non-profit status permits natural allies in various fields to acknowledge the importance of improving the accuracy of freely available information about psychoactives and to contribute, either privately or publicly, to this goal.

Our plan for the Erowid Expert Network integrates many smaller projects and tasks we already perform informally into a more comprehensive vision. From doctors, lawyers, and law enforcement officers to journalists and experiential experts, we can collectively build a resource that participants can contribute to as well as benefit from.

Such people will help by being available for consulting, by reviewing published or in-press documents, or by acting as expert resources for media, publishers, educators,

and other professionals. We often receive requests from journalists for information, or for a spokesperson or experienced person to interview. We need writers to draft articles and readers to review documents in their areas of expertise. Scholarly journal articles, news stories, and policy documents need to be checked and critiqued. The potential impact of proposed laws and the actual impact of newly approved laws need to be analyzed and evaluated by legal experts. And as always, the website must be maintained and improved to provide information in a format useful to both the general public and professionals such as physicians seeking information in the treatment of a patient.

A Community of the Informed

We are seeking assistance from everyone: pharmacologists, chemists, toxicologists, physicians, therapists, drug counselors, law enforcement, policy makers and analysts, parole officers, artists, musicians, authors, experts in psychedelic culture, anthropologists, educators, botanists, gardeners, and anyone else who has an abiding interest in and knowledge of psychoactives. The Erowid core crew will continue to review and vet members of the new expert network, as we always have, seeking to build a web of individuals and communities who prioritize improving information accuracy and communication quality in the often-challenging fields surrounding psychoactives and their use. Since we feel strongly that Erowid must not be a source for unwanted communications (spam), privacy and security are top concerns for this project.

Erowid’s Expert Network will include a Board of Advisors: experts who endorse the project’s data-collection and educational efforts and who agree to have their names listed as public members of the advisory board. We have just begun the process of inviting a diverse and talented group of people to become Advisors.

Building and formalizing the Expert Network is a priority for the new

Founding Donors

2008 is Erowid Center’s inaugural year. We are working to raise \$150,000 over our yearly operating budget to provide a solid financial footing from which to launch the Erowid Expert Network and other projects. We are seeking Visionary and Founding Members to donate \$1,000 or more toward this goal.

Founding Members (\$5,000 and higher) have a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact on Erowid Center’s mission. These important contributors will receive permanent recognition as Founding Donors—acknowledged on a brick in both our (currently virtual) Founding Members Wall and on the Erowid website—as well as a small commemorative token of our appreciation.

Corporate Giving

We are asking Erowid members who work for companies that have corporate matching programs to contact their HR department to request that Erowid Center be added to the list of 501(c)(3) organizations for which the company will match contributions. This is generally a simple process that includes providing the HR department with nominal information about Erowid Center so that they can contact us for formal verification of our non-profit status. See Erowid.org/donations/corporate_giving for more information.

Increasing Membership

Erowid currently has 1,356 members. Our goal is to broaden our base of support and increase our membership by 10% in 2008 (to 1,500). Please help by talking to your friends.

Erowid Center. It will facilitate projects that provide direct benefit to our visitors and will allow more effective use of Erowid Center’s time and resources.

We hope Erowid Center members and supporters will be excited about this project and will contribute ideas, technical assistance, and funding to make Erowid Center’s first year a success. ●

If you would like to join the Erowid Expert Network, please fill out a short application at: Erowid.org/extracts/n14/een

THE SUMMER OF POPPIES



AN EXPERIENCE WITH OPIUM ADDICTION

BY PAPAVER MAN

This is the tale of my brush with opium addiction. I'm currently 22, although the events described here took place over a four-month period three years ago.

I always research drugs before I consider using them. Opiates held no great interest for me; I was well aware of the strong potential for addiction and the rapid tolerance that builds to their effects. My main areas of drug interest and experimentation are marijuana, psychedelics, and milder psychoactive herbs. At the time of my flirtation with opium I was a daily marijuana smoker, and had experimented with mushrooms, ecstasy, salvia, absinthe, lotus, and passion flower, among others.

It seemed I couldn't walk down an alley without coming across some flowering specimens of *Papaver somniferum* to be admired...

I got my first taste of opiates the same way most people do, through legitimate medical use. A couple of years ago when all of my wisdom teeth were taken out, I was prescribed Tylenol 3 (acetaminophen and codeine). I was supposed to take two of them three times a day until I ran out. I was honestly quite shocked. Here was a doctor giving me opiates, which I knew were addictive, telling me to take them multiple times daily (I think it was a four-day script). Thanks doc, no wonder people get addicted to this shit. Out of curiosity I asked, "What if I run out and my mouth still hurts?" He replied, "Oh, just phone us up and we'll get you a refill." If my jaw hadn't hurt so much it would have

dropped. Sure, why not hand out more opiates? It's not like they're dangerous or anything.

I was pretty spaced out the first day I took the pills but by the third day I discovered the joy and wonder induced by smoking the bowl of marijuana about an hour after my evening dose of T3s. I didn't call for a refill of my prescription and that was pretty much the end of my opiate usage for a few years.

The summer I was 19 there was a bumper crop of beautiful poppies in my neighborhood—all different colors: red, and pink, and some with purple centers. The pods ranged in size from small marbles to golf ball-sized monstrosities.

It seemed I couldn't walk down an alley without coming across flowering specimens of *Papaver somniferum* to be admired, often growing wild in waste lots. There were five patches within a five-minute walk of my house.

Having poppies around raised a dilemma for me. There was a big difference between taking a pharmaceutical pill to get high and partaking of a psychoactive plant to get high. The plant has a spirit, and I guess I felt more comfortable experimenting with a plant than with little white pills. Opium has always intrigued me, knowing that so many famous writers and artists in the 19th century had used it. As a child I had read of opium dens in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes and in Verne's classic *Around the World in Eighty Days*. All of this made me very curious.

On the other hand, I was scared of trying opium, scared of getting addicted.

I had read about heroin and how strong the rush was, and I was worried that opium would be like that, so good that I would not want to live without it. Then I told myself, "Man, you're just being stupid. No drug could possibly be that good."

I trusted my ability to sample opium and withdraw unscathed. So I took a knife blade and gently sliced a few poppy heads. A thick white juice (the latex that becomes raw opium when dried) oozed out from the cut marks. I smeared this on a rolling paper and filled it with marijuana to make an opiated joint. When I smoked it, I felt completely relaxed, calm and mellow. There seemed to be an extra visual sparkle to things. It was dreamy and enjoyable. It was kind of like my early days of getting stoned, when the high would get very intense.

The flavor of the raw opium was remarkable. I didn't feel or taste anything upon inhalation but as I exhaled a delicate flowery perfume filled my mouth and nostrils. I experienced no real comedown from the opium, and I felt no aftereffects or craving in the following days.

"Well, what were they talking about?" I asked myself. "Opium doesn't seem as addictive as they say, at least not in the 'smoke it once and you'll be hooked forever' way they always warned us about." So I began to indulge from time to time in a little bit of opium, usually smearing the fresh juice from the poppies directly onto a rolling paper or marijuana buds.

I quickly discovered that the latter technique—dabbing the latex onto weed and then immediately smoking it in a bowl—was a far more effective method of using the opium than smoking it on the paper of a joint, which seemed to waste much of the opium. I began to really

enjoy adding just a touch of it to a bowl of weed to heighten the effects. After a time the opium no longer got me significantly higher, or higher in a more enjoyable way, than weed alone did, but for some reason I found the whole experience of weed and opium much more rewarding.

Yet it didn't seem like that extra edge of relaxation and calm was worth the danger of addiction. I began to worry when I was no longer going more than a few days, a week at most, without smoking a bit of opium. Sometimes I would even smoke it two or three days in a row, an action I knew with absolute faith was profoundly stupid, the quickest way to lead to addiction. There was something enormously compelling, I now realized, about opium.

I began to understand. It is not that opium produced such an amazing feeling; but once I'd gotten the taste for it, for some reason it became closely linked with a sense of satisfaction in my brain. This led to bizarre thinking like, "I won't be satisfactorily high unless my pot is laced with opium." I always felt like adding a bit of it to a bowl of weed, and often had to struggle not to. It was easy, since all I had to do was take a little jaunt and collect a few poppies.

As the opium high itself became less enjoyable, I began to notice the first signs

of withdrawal. After smoking opium consecutively for two or three days I would panic, and make myself stop. I really was, at all times, aware and concerned that the substance I was smoking was addictive. I kept telling myself that it would be truly foolish to get addicted when I knew better. I would feel okay on the first day without opium, then the second day I would start fiending a bit for an opium-laced bowl. On the third day I would begin feeling a little sad and depressed, and this feeling would intensify on the fourth and fifth days, gradually easing after that.

I knew the opium was messing with my emotions. Sometimes I would cry for no reason and I often felt sad or depressed. Sometimes my body would ache, like I was perpetually overtired, and I would feel like I was just beginning to get a cold. After five or six or seven days I usually felt okay again, and would even question whether my experiences in the previous days were related to the opium. "Maybe I'm getting sick", I would say to myself. And so, with temptation all around me, I would end up taking another poppy, gently slicing open its flesh and pouring the milky white venom onto my innocent marijuana flowers. As soon as I tasted that sweet perfume when exhaling I would simultaneously experience exultant relief and bliss, and a nagging feeling that everything I was doing was wrong.

In late August I began to come to terms with the fact that I would have to drastically reduce my opium consumption in the near future. I had made a rule never to seek out or buy any other opiates. I would stick with the poppies and nothing else. I made a stash of twelve opium-smeared rollies, with the idea of rationing them: a one-per-month limit. I managed to smoke about six of them within the week. Then I decided I really needed to stop. Same routine, but the withdrawal effects (now that I recognized what they were) were gradually getting more noticeable.

I also had an experience that kind of scared me. I had started vaporizing little bits of opium resin with a hot knife (like one would do with hash or oil), since this produced a strong rush after just one or two hits. This time I had a freshly sliced poppy, and I vaporized a big amount of the latex and inhaled it all. It immediately blasted me into a space where I lost contact with the outside world for a moment. It was a

I really was at all times aware and concerned that the substance I was smoking was addictive.

powerful rush. Up until that point, I had no idea opium could give such a fast and strong distortion of reality. It was almost like taking a hit of salvia. The main impression I brought back was that of an overwhelmingly sticky sweet feeling. The flavor and taste of the opium were burned vividly in my mind. When coming out of this trance state, I noticed that my body had unconsciously thrown the poppy heads away from me. I felt pure evil and malignance in their juice.

It was this experience that broke my addiction. Afterwards, my desire not to smoke opium was finally stronger than my (still early stages of) addiction and withdrawal symptoms. The first week was pretty tough, the second week easier, and after the third week, opium just passed out of my consciousness. A month or two passed and I realized, "Hey, I haven't smoked any opium in a long time!"

All in all I consider myself pretty lucky. I dabbled too much in the flower of joy, and fortunately I got away with it. I was saved because poppies are seasonal, because I tripped myself out vaporizing the stuff, and because I knew deep down that the beginning of withdrawal symptoms meant my opium use had to stop. I have used opium since then, however I always leave three or four months between uses and use very small doses, to ensure there is no chance of addiction. ●

Erowid.org/exp/61835



Papaver somniferum, Photo by Erowid

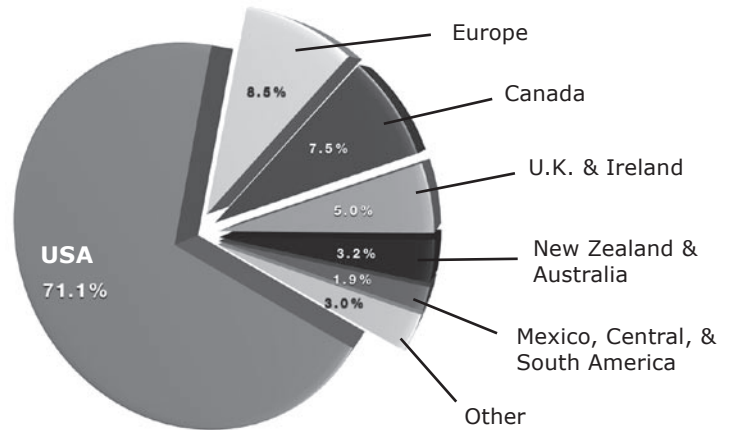
Erowid Visitor Micro-Surveys

BY FIRE & EARTH EROWID

Following the launch of Erowid Center in January we began conducting a series of “micro-surveys” on Erowid.org with two purposes in mind: first, to help determine the current demographics of our visitors and second, to begin to quantify their opinions about certain psychoactive-related issues. Each survey consisted of three to six questions displayed just under the header on a large number of pages on the site.

Because of the amount of traffic that Erowid receives, we get a large number of responses to such micro-surveys. Each survey remained live until it received approximately 20,000 responses, which took between 7 and 14 days.

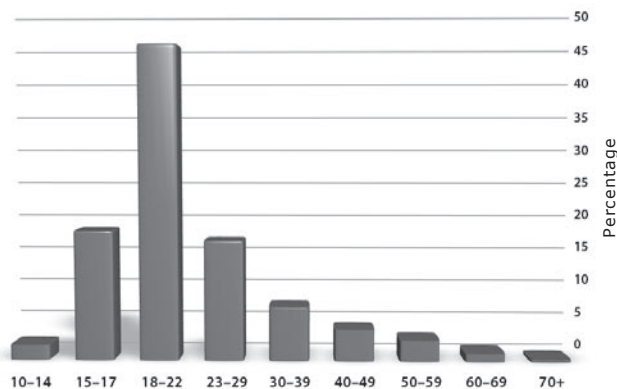
We welcome proposals for future surveys to conduct, as well as help from those who have experience analyzing survey data, to assist in identifying the most interesting results.



Country of Residence

One survey asked visitors where they live. As expected, the vast majority of visitors come from countries that have English as its first language. 71.1% of visitors are from the United States and 29.9% from other countries.

Visitor Age



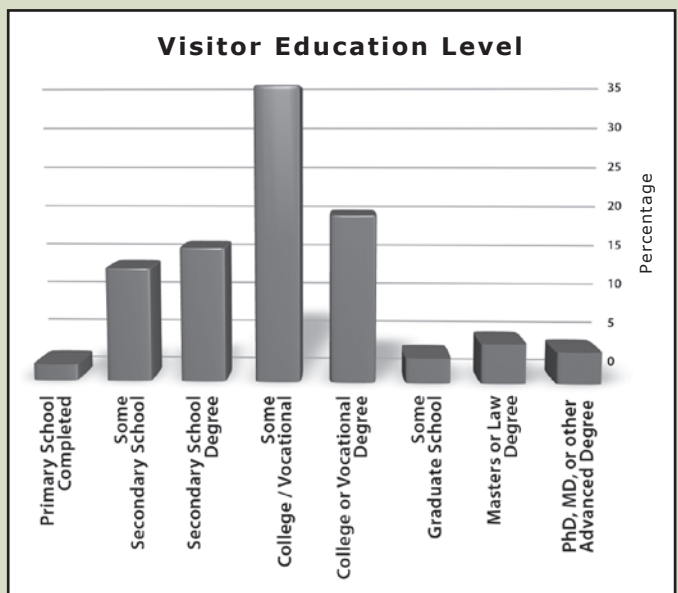
Age

Six recent surveys asked visitors their age and all received consistent results. With a total of more than 120,000 responses, 45.3% of all respondents reported they were 18–22 years old. This is similar to responses received in late 2005 (42%) and 2002 (36%).

Education Level

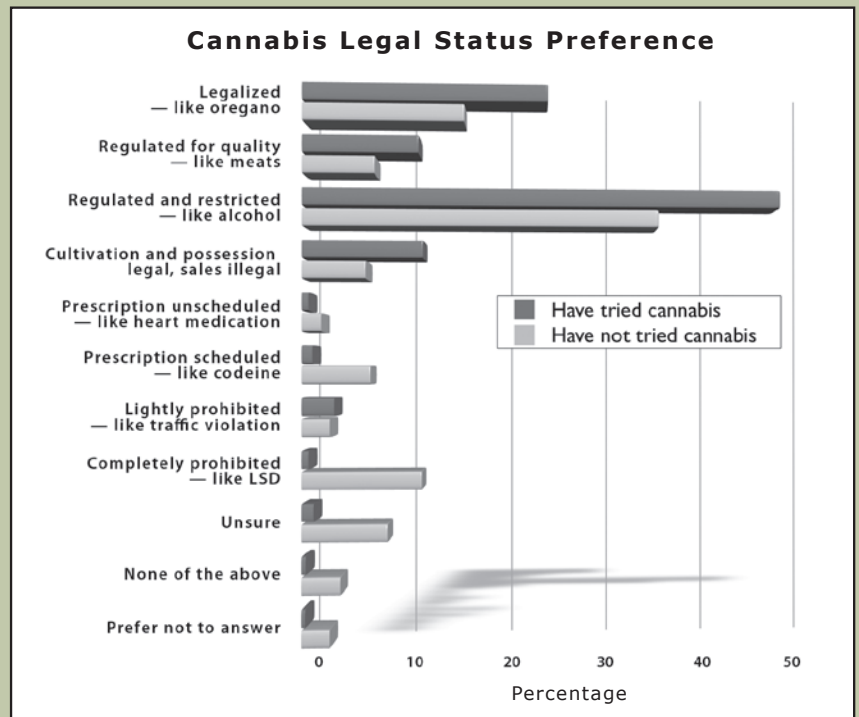
The highest levels of education reported by visitors were similar to previous surveys and consistent with the ages reported by survey respondents. Over 55% of respondents have attended or completed college. This corresponds to the percentage of Erowid visitors who have reported in other surveys that they are college students.

Visitor Education Level



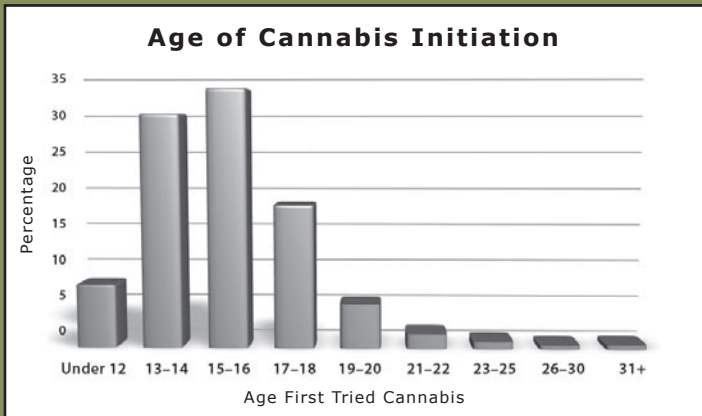
Cannabis Use

Of those visitors who responded to three surveys about cannabis, approximately 93% said that they had tried cannabis at least once in their life, with between 1% and 2.5% saying they preferred not to answer the question. Those under 15 and those over 40 years old reported lower rates of having tried cannabis. Of survey respondents who said they were 15–17 years old, 93% reported having tried cannabis, compared to Monitoring the Future’s 2007 estimate that 42% of U.S. high school seniors (ages 17–18) have tried cannabis. As expected, Erowid visitors who complete cannabis-related surveys report a significantly higher rate of cannabis use than those who fill out an in-school national survey.



Cannabis Regulation

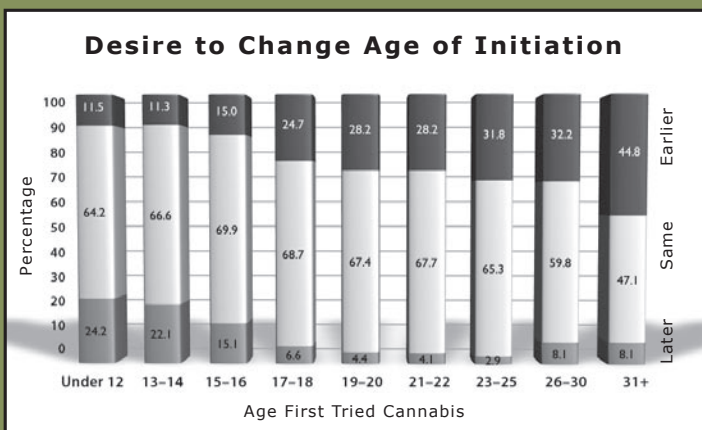
One survey asked visitors their preference for the legal status of cannabis. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of respondents preferred regulatory schema very different from what currently exists in most countries. Less than 4.5% preferred either of the two “prohibited” options. There was, however, a large disparity between the opinions of those who reported having ever tried cannabis and those who said they had not.



Age of Cannabis Initiation

Two surveys asked how old respondents were when they first tried cannabis. The median age range given for initiating cannabis use was 15–16. Perhaps the most surprising result was that 35% of respondents said they first tried cannabis before they were 15 years old.

One question asked whether respondents wished they had first tried cannabis at a different age. Overall, 63% reported that they would keep the age when they first tried it the same; 30% said they would change when they first used cannabis, with 14% wishing they’d tried it later and 16% wishing they’d tried it earlier.



Perhaps most interesting, correlating age of initiation with whether the person wished they could change that age: those who first tried cannabis when they were younger than 15 were twice as likely to wish they had tried it later than earlier, those 15–16 were evenly split between wishing they had tried it later and earlier, and those older than 17 were four to five times more likely to wish they’d tried it earlier than later.

The 2008 World Psychedelic Forum

Basel, Switzerland

by Jon Hanna

Switzerland in spring is more hospitable than Switzerland in winter: cold, but not bone-chilling cold. It is impossible to avoid comparing and contrasting the January 2006 “LSD: Problem Child and Wonder Drug” conference celebrating Albert Hofmann’s 100th birthday with the March 2008 “World Psychedelic Forum: Consciousness Change, A Challenge of the 21st Century”. Both were produced by the Gaia Media Foundation at the Congress Center in Basel, and each included approximately 70 speakers. To the conference producers’ credit, only about a third of the presenters were common to both gatherings, and this one featured a bounty of generally new faces in the scene, due to the inclusion of six “Rising Researchers” panels moderated by Thomas B. Roberts. These panels were extremely well attended and represented the considerable breadth and depth of current psychedelic research. While unquestionably still a minority, there were twice as many women presenters at this year’s event, suggesting that the event producers actively responded to feedback related to the scarcity of females at the previous conference. Overall there didn’t seem to be as many attendees this year as there were two years ago and it was also

clear that many more of the people present hailed from Europe, whereas in 2006 there was a more sizable American contingent. Art and collected ephemera were less prevalent in the exhibition hall, and the bookstore seemed a bit smaller in 2008, but the overall vibe of enthusiasm and high-quality data exchange was retained.

From Behind Bars

I was involved with several presentations at the event. On short notice, Forum producer Dieter Hagenbach asked if I would deliver a paper written by drug war prisoner William Leonard Pickard titled “International LSD Prevalence: Factors Affecting Proliferation and Control”. The paper was presented in memory of John Beresford, who passed away on September 2, 2007, a longtime advocate for releasing drug war prisoners and a mutual friend of Leonard and mine. One interesting topic from Pickard’s paper was his discussion of the Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Information System (NADDIS), which compiles records, creates reports on “individuals of interest”, and makes these available online to investigators in law enforcement.

Pickard points out that, despite being “the most widely used tool is drug law enforcement”, integrating everything from freeway toll records to witness interviews, it is virtually unknown to the general public. Pickard quotes from the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in the U.S., a court that holds review

power over drug cases from Indiana to Wisconsin: “It would be nice to know something about NADDIS.” A full copy of the paper will eventually be posted on freepickard.org.

I handed out a hundred flyers with the names and addresses of over a dozen drug war prisoners, encouraging listeners to pick at least one prisoner and initiate correspondence. There are several drug war prisoners with whom I have been corresponding for over a decade, so I was happy to deliver this talk and encourage others to find a prisoner pen-pal.

The 2008 event featured a bounty of generally new faces in the scene, due to the inclusion of six “Rising Researchers” panels.

During the conference closing ceremonies I was given the opportunity to say a few words about the underground chemists who risk their freedom to provide people their experiences with psychedelics. I also played a short phone message recorded earlier that day from such a chemist, Casey Hardison, who is serving a twenty-year prison sentence in England. Although the sound quality was not great, it was nevertheless a poignant moment (his message is now posted at freecasey.org), and several people thanked me afterwards for drawing attention to the plight of drug war prisoners.

Psychopticon Animatrix II

In 2006 I presented a collection of hallucinatory animation that I had edited together, featuring clips from the 1920s through to the early 2000s. This was shown to about 600 people at that event; so in 2008, I created a second similar compilation DVD, with all-new material from the 1930s until the present. In an effort to include more films in 2008, the event organizers assigned a tiny room for projections, and



Erowid Booth, Photo by Jon Hanna

unfortunately the film schedule did not appear in the main program. With five concurrent sessions happening most of the time—six, if you count films—there was much more than anyone could possibly take in. This resulted in small audiences for all of the films, and attendance for my screening was sparse. Nevertheless, those who did show up were enthusiastic, and I gave away at least a dozen discs to viewers who requested them.

Erowid In Basel

I later co-presented with Sylvia Thyssen about our work with Erowid. We kicked off with a video of Sasha and Ann Shulgin, who were unable to attend the event due to Sasha's pending heart surgery. (He is back at home now, recovering well.) After the video, Sylvia and I discussed the process by which assumptions or errors of fact related to psychoactives may be accepted as truth. Several specific examples were presented, including the theory that oracular predictions in ancient Delphi resulted from ethylene inhalation, the theory of pineal DMT production, and the common problem of researchers citing and misrepresenting content from papers that they have not actually read. We described general biases that need to be acknowledged, and pointed toward techniques that incorporate the sort of diligent awareness required to thwart such mistakes.

I also spent time helping Sylvia staff the Erowid booth at the conference, along with Erowid volunteers John Paul and Katherine. Many conference attendees stopped by the booth to wish us well with our work on the site or to become members and make a donation. We also had numerous opportunities to field "Ask Erowid" type questions regarding visionary plants and drugs from those in attendance.

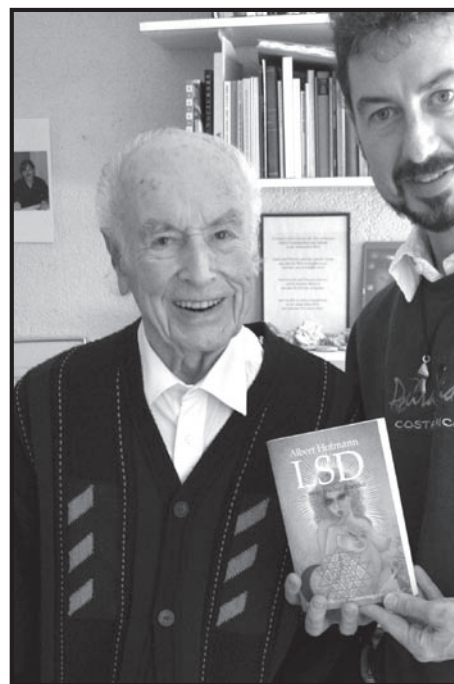
One of the more interesting queries came from a couple of individuals who had met because they were suffering from symptoms of Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD), purportedly as a result of their use of butanamines such as 1-(4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenyl)-2-butamine. They were wondering if we had heard of such effects. (When I later discussed this with Sasha Shulgin at his house in early April he opined, "That

sounds like some sort of brain damage.") Unfortunately, when exotic research chemicals such as 4C-DOB are involved—and particularly if psychonauts are reluctant to report on the effects of their experiments due to their fear of drawing unwanted attention to unscheduled compounds—it is difficult or impossible to gauge the prevalence of specific side effects.

A Visit With Dr. Hofmann

For some attendees, particularly those who didn't make it in 2006, the greatest disappointment was that Dr. Hofmann wasn't in attendance. The reason for his absence was uncertain—possibly a failing memory, perhaps consternation that the event was held over Easter weekend, or maybe just an increasing reluctance to travel.

After the conference, on March 25, I was fortunate enough to visit him at his home in Rittimatte, with Jonathan Ott and Andrew Sewell (pictured above right with Albert). The picturesque drive up to his property—a portion of which extends into France—was straight out of Swiss calendar art with snow-capped chalets dotting the mountainside. Albert was spry and sharp as a tack, speaking to us fluently in both German and English. There was no indication during our visit that he only had a month to live. His home contained an indoor swimming pool and multiple staircases, so he clearly had ample opportunity for exercise, even inside during the winter months. Pointing out an inversion table, Jonathan Ott mentioned that Albert had constructed his own gravity boots in order to obtain the health benefits of hanging upside-down. Albert just smiled. We took in the breathtaking view from his office, and he showed us the shelf where he keeps the many translations of his book *LSD – mein Sorgenkind*. He was particularly tickled by the cover art on the Czech translation depicting a bare-breasted woman with a 1970s hairdo. We then went upstairs to his library, where he showed us some of his visionary art collection.



Albert Hofmann, Photo by Jon Hanna

Later, back downstairs, a ceramic cat that Albert had sculpted was accompanied by an occasional mew from his pet cat. He proudly offered us schnapps that he had distilled in 2004 from plums he had picked off of trees on his property that grew from pits he had planted some thirty-seven years earlier when he bought the place. Now that's going the whole nine yards to make some booze! Jonathan declared it to be "Hofmann's other elixir"; the taste was clean, clear, and potent. Albert joyfully recounted stories of past exploits as we sat enthralled. Eventually we said our goodbyes, and drove back down the mountain. I feel honored to have been able to spend some time with Dr. Hofmann at his home.

The Basel conference was once again a rousing success, bringing together the tribe, rekindling old friendships and sparking new ones. The number of current studies discussed in the "Rising Researchers" panels alone clearly shows that there is a renaissance of interest in psychedelic investigations. Many of these researchers were quite a bit younger than other presenters, suggesting a hopeful future for this area of study. I look forward to the next event that Gaia Media Foundation produces. ●

TRANSCRIBING DR. SHULGIN'S LAB BOOKS

by the Erowid Crew

In an era of prolific experience report writing facilitated by the Internet, the hand-written reports that fill the first of Dr. Alexander Shulgin's early 1960s lab books offer a glimpse into the private reflections of a group of intrepid psychonauts.

In order to maximize the value of these amazing artifacts, Erowid is creating text versions of the scanned pages. Using a wiki to coordinate the process, we are managing a group of volunteers who are painstakingly

transcribing the faded and often difficult-to-read writing, page by page. So far, four volunteers have stepped forward to help decipher the scanned pages and commit them to searchable text. The wiki is easy to use and volunteers can do as little or as much as they would like.

Lab Book #1 was published in October 2007 and its transcription is under way, the scanning of Lab Book #2 has been completed and it is being proofed prior to publication, and

Lab Book #3 is currently undergoing anonymizing in preparation for scanning.

Though it is slow going, this process requires very little training and there is a lot to do. We could use more help! If you are interested in assisting with this project, please fill out the volunteer form at Erowid.org/volunteers and mention the Shulgin transcription project. ●

You can find the lab books at: Erowid.org/books_online/shulgin_labbooks/

Reading the lab books provides a reminder of why Sasha developed the simple "Shulgin Scale": he was addressing the question of whether the substances he was experimenting with were psychoactive at all. The scale is designed for recording the most basic information about a compound at a specific dose (as with the MDA entry below), not for identifying nuances of the type or level of effects once a substance's effective dose range is known.

The first books are labeled on the cover and every page with "Dow Chemical Company". Sasha worked for Dow at the time and was performing some of the experiments with an eye towards potential commercial use. A few pages are marked with official signatures of Dow employees certifying that they had read and understood the contents.

+ 10/28/65 ATS 35.0 mg 9:30 AM. Probably threshold mentally - definite threshold automatically. 10:30 50% dilation - teeth rubbery - eyes pretty much normal 1:00 PM. Mental confusion shown in calculations, played poor bridge. mental effort certainly gone by 1-2 pm. very nebulous.

There are many curious and interesting experiments reported. A notable series of trials, starting in March 1963, begins with the consumption of raw leaves of *Salvia divinorum* and by June 1964 moves on to the ingestion of a "glassy extract" of the leaves.

I have read pages 22 to 29 in this notebook and understand their contents. There are no blank pages, except . All entries are in the handwriting of Dr. Alexander Shulgin.
Signed: [Signature] Date: 10/19/62
Signed: [Signature] Date: 10/19/62

5/28/63 10:50 AM several small leaves These were leaves which were left from the pruning and making cuttings of one of the plants AD brought to the lab. Unfortunately prior to this trial I had consumed both dinner and a considerable amount of wine. There was possible lightheadedness, but nothing dramatic, and certainly ascribable at least in part to the wine. Taste not at all unpleasant. An intensification(?) of the (wine) intoxication provides sufficient justification to build a green-house. Am doing.
Σ 5.0g.
11:10 PM several more, 5g → 10g

In Memorium

Albert Hofmann

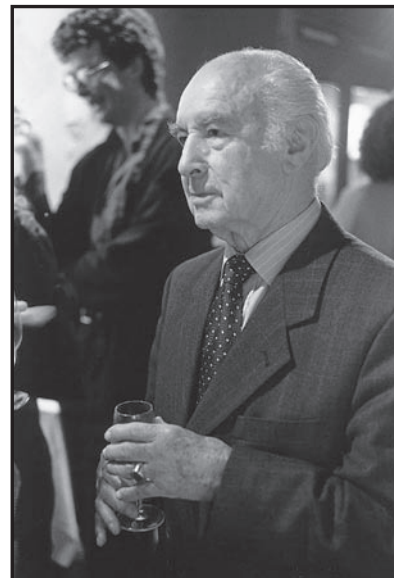
(Jan 11, 1906–Apr 29, 2008)

Albert Hofmann was over 60 before any of the core Erowid crew were born. As an adult, he witnessed the explosive growth of the pharmaceutical industry in the 1940s and 50s, psychedelics in the 1950s and 60s, and a plethora of other psychoactive substances in the 1970s through the present. As the world adjusted to this new reality, he watched his most infamous creation soar through the media sphere and be pilloried as a destroyer of youth. He dubbed LSD his *Sorgenkind* (problem child) and his observations about it included a mixture of both concern and amazement at its potential.

Despite his near-hero status among the psychedelic counterculture, it was surprising how much attention was given to his death by mainstream media outlets.

The front pages of major news websites including CNN, *The New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and others, ensured his passing was widely known. For a short time, it was the most emailed news story on *Yahoo! News*. That the inventor and lifelong supporter of LSD lived healthily and prosperously to 102 serves to help discredit the worst myths about his problem child more than dozens of scientific studies ever could.

It was an honor to have met and visited with Albert, an amazingly sharp and capable man. We appreciate the scintillating shades of grey he contributed to the controversial discourse about LSD. May his most hopeful dreams be realized.



1996 Photo by Sahli, Solothurn, Switzerland

102 Years Young

In March 2008, Albert shared a story of a time in Germany when he and Timothy Leary gave a talk together. Afterwards, a crowd of press gathered to ask them questions. Albert was quite tickled that one newswoman repeatedly inquired about the effects of LSD on sex. Leary had famously remarked in a 1966 interview for *Playboy* that “a woman will inevitably have several hundred orgasms” under the influence of acid. As he told the story, Albert gleefully laughed, “She kept asking, ‘But what about the orgasms?’ The press could ask *anything*, but she only wanted to know about the orgasms. Finally Tim admitted that he had made the whole thing up!” — Jon Hanna

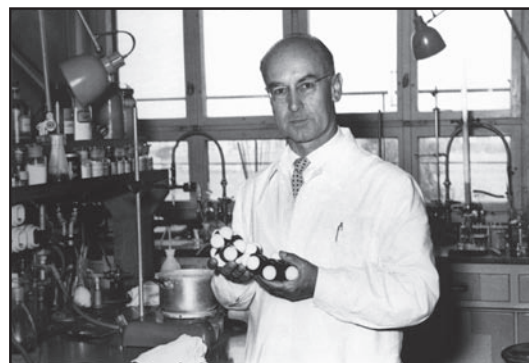


Photo from Gallery at 2006 LSD Symposium



Albert & Anita Hofmann, 2006 Photo by Erowid



Hofmann & Shulgin, 2006 Photo by Erowid



ca. 1929 Photo from Gallery at 2006 LSD Symposium

The Distillation

The Distillation includes updates, statistics, and information that we hope will offer insight into the ongoing site additions, traffic, and projects currently underway at Erowid.

Summary

General Content Pages	13,279
Archived Site Pages	4,660
Experience Reports	17,244
References	6,936
Ask Erowid	551
The Erowid Review	197
Content Images	5,040
Visionary Art	1,964
Total	49,871

Erowid Files on Server	123,583
Erowid Disk Footprint	34.6 GB

Current Members	1,355
Daily Visitors	60,665

General Content

General Content Pages	13,279
-----------------------	--------

Number of Substance Vaults	314
----------------------------	-----

Most Popular Substance Vaults (with change)

Cannabis (↔); LSD (↔); MDMA (↑); Mushrooms (↓); *Salvia divinorum* (↑); Cocaine (↓); DMT (↑); Morning Glory (↓); Oxycodone (↑); Methamphetamine (↓); DXM (↓); Ketamine (↔); Heroin (↑); Opiates (↓); 2C-B (↑); Amanitas (↑); Peyote (↔); Amphetamine (↑); Datura (↓); Cacti (↑); Ayahuasca (↑); Nitrous Oxide (↓); Hydrocodone (↑).

Most Accessed Documents

Drug Testing Basics; Mushroom Effects; LSD Effects; Cannabis Drug Testing; Cannabis Effects; MDMA Effects; Salvia Effects; Salvia FAQ; Salvia Law; Cocaine Effects; LSD Basics; Mushroom Basics; LSD FAQ.

Visionary Art



Shamanita Illuminatus (Prismacolor Pencil)
by Ciaran — www.ciaranshaman.co.uk



Egg Scepter (Color Pencil)
by Adam Pinson — redeye-art.com



Roundabout (Paint and Pixel)
by Scott Façon — web.mac.com/scottfacon/

Published Art Pieces	1,964
Number of Artists	552
Viewed Per Day	5,834

New Pieces in Last 6 Mo.	31
New Artists in Last 6 Mo.	7
Curated by Christopher Barnaby	



Chamane (Photo on Cartoline Paper)
by Hervé Merliac — visuelimage.com/merliac/



San Pedro (Acrylic on Canvas)
by Leou — leou.ca

Experience Reports

Published Reports	17,244
Published in Last 6 Mo.	1,542
Fully Triaged Reports	22,258
Partially Triaged Reports	1,337
Un-triaged Reports	10,989
Viewed Each Day	112,239
Submitted Each Day	22
Substances Included	469
Active Triagers/Reviewers	24

Art Vault Curator Takes Leave of Absence

Since 2000, Christopher Barnaby has curated the Erowid Visionary Art Vaults, heroically hand-preparing the images and pages for publication on the site. For more than seven years, he has gone out of his way to do regular updates, sort incoming art, select artists of the month and compile one of the largest curated collections of visionary art online, comprising nearly 2,000 pieces. Christopher is part of the core Erowid crew and is on Erowid Center's Council of Electors, the group that elects our Board of Directors.

While volunteering at Erowid, Christopher has made his living operating an eclectic and progressive herb store in Sydney, Australia. In October 2006, Christopher and his wife Vanessa gave birth to a baby girl, Amanita Seraphim Hoffman-Barnaby. Trying to juggle work and a new baby has left less time and attention for interacting with artists and keeping up with all of the tasks necessary to maintain the Visionary Art Vaults. Because of this, Christopher has decided to take a leave of absence from his position as curator for six to nine months, after which he will either resume or help us transition to a new curator.

Although we'll miss Christopher, we're very happy that he's making more time for his new family. We can't say enough about how fantastic he has been to work with and how well he has handled the difficult job of reviewing submitted art and negotiating diverse opinions about what should and should not be included under the category Visionary Art at Erowid.

We hope to use this hiatus in Christopher's work as an opportunity to modernize the management of the art submission and review process and to better integrate it with the rest of the site.

Image Vaults

Published Images	5,040	New in Last 6 Mo.	58
Image Vaults	271	Submitted Each Day	5
Viewed Per Day	53,199	Awaiting Processing	8,718

Venlafaxine / Effexor, Photo by MadHatter



Psilocybe subaeruginosa, Photo by Psy

SALIS Conference Report

In May, Sylvia represented Erowid Center at the 30th annual Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists (SALIS) conference. Fifty people from university departments and research centers, prevention and treatment groups, government agencies and other organizations gathered in Seattle, Washington to discuss trends in their field. A common theme was the reduction in funding for Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug (ATOD) document collections and the need to adapt to pressures that web-based information access has exerted on brick-and-mortar libraries and peer-reviewed journals.

In his presentation, Robert Denniston, from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (the “drug czar’s” office), mentioned Erowid in passing as an example of a website that “teaches” teens how to use prescription drugs. Despite this prohibitionist moment, discussions with the numerous attendees unfamiliar with Erowid’s novel point of view resulted in curiosity and encouragement to present about the site at a future conference. Happily, participation in this event put Erowid in contact with key professionals who work in psychoactive information services. Thank you to SALIS for welcoming Erowid Center as a member.

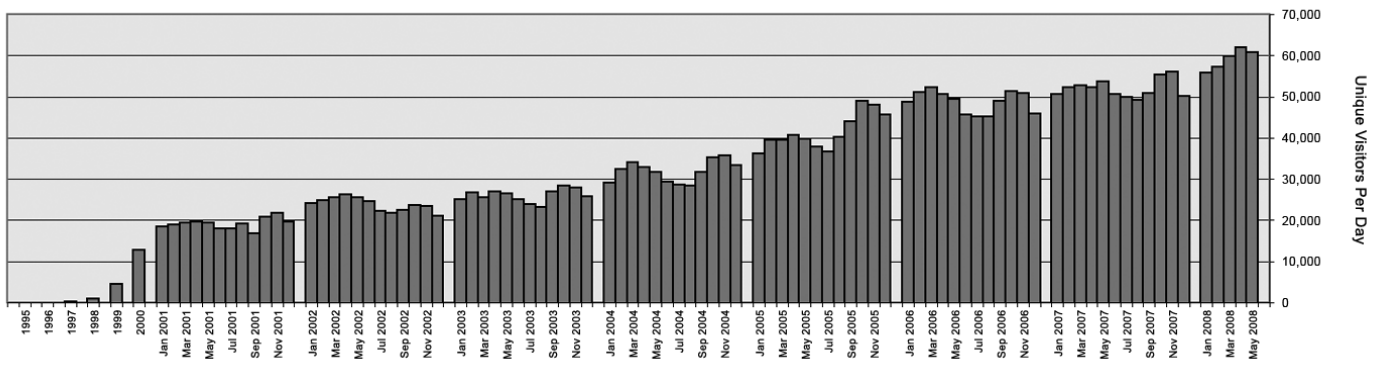
The Erowid Review

Published Reviews	196
Published in Last 6 Mo.	7
Viewed Each Day	1,739



1906 Bottle of Morphine Syrup, Photo by Kyle W.

Daily Erowid Visitors (1995–2008)



Erowid Gala Benefit

In June, to celebrate the launch of Erowid Center and as part of our drive for Founding and Visionary donors, Katherine Rochlin Fenster and Jon Hanna are organizing Erowid Center’s first fundraiser, in San Francisco. This high-end event is targeted at long-time or higher dollar contributors who wish to see Erowid Center excel as a new non-profit.

In addition to dinner and cocktails, the evening will feature brief presentations, art, and music with special guests including Alex and Allyson Grey, toxicologist Edward Boyer, author Erik Davis, neuroscientist Matthew Baggott, futurist Ramez Naam, artist Vibrata Chromodoris, cellist Zoe Keating, and others.

We are looking to plan additional fundraisers during 2008 to celebrate Erowid Center and to help raise at least six months of operating expenses. One group of Erowid friends is tentatively planning a fundraising event in Seattle in July or August. To inquire about these events or offer your suggestions, please contact sage@erowid.org.

EcstasyData Summary				
2008	Daily Visitors	3,699	Daily Page Hits	28,273
	Results Posted	15	Daily File Hits	338,082

BY YEAR	Tablets Tested		Testing Results (1999–2008)	
	2007	39	Total Restuls Posted	1,552
	2006	30	MDMA Only	(38%) 587
	2005	133	MDMA + something	(18%) 278
	2004	151	No MDMA	(44%) 687
	2003	148	– Nothing	98
2000–2	966	– Unidentified	46	



Erowid Traffic Statistics				
DAILY	Visitors	60,665	File Hits	4,217,491
	Transfer	26.58 GB	Page Hits	448,488

BY MONTH		Avg Daily File Hits	Avg Daily Page Hits	Avg Daily Visitors
	Apr 2008	4,262,247	462,703	61,889
	Mar 2008	3,951,726	460,123	59,784
	Feb 2008	4,132,964	451,656	57,142
	Jan 2008	3,845,258	436,748	55,759
	Dec 2007	3,513,858	405,026	50,141
Nov 2007	3,884,103	450,395	56,123	

BY YEAR				
	2007	3,559,761	439,501	51,979
	2006	3,025,185	409,796	48,443
	2005	2,544,202	402,567	41,412
	2004	1,799,694	405,528	31,241
	2003	1,421,815	349,530	25,997
2002	1,206,855	283,541	23,042	
2001	798,400	207,427	17,300	

Membership

Current Members	1,356
Recently Expired Members (0-6 mo.)	404
Older Expired Members (6+ mo.)	3,129
Members in U.S.	932 (69%)
Members in Other Countries	423 (31%)
Countries with Members	35
Top Membership Countries	
USA (919); UK (82); Canada (76); Australia (54); Germany (27); Netherlands (24); Norway (20); Sweden (15); Switzerland (12); France (12); Ireland (11); Denmark (11); Italy (10); Belgium (8); Spain (8); Finland (8); Mexico (4); Austria (4); Brazil (3).	

VERBATIM

“In war, you can only be killed once, but in politics, many times.”

—Winston Churchill (1874–1965)

“[I]n political discussion heat is in inverse proportion to knowledge.”

—James G. C. Minchin (1851–unkn.)

“I’ve always said that in politics, your enemies can’t hurt you, but your friends will kill you.”

—Ann Richards (1933–2006)

“A national political campaign is better than the best circus ever heard of, with a mass baptism and a couple of hangings thrown in.”

—H. L. Mencken (1880–1956)

“Insanity in individuals is something rare—but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs, it is the rule.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)

“The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

—W. B. Yeats (1865–1939)

“Life is like art. You have to work hard to keep it simple and still have meaning.”

—Charles de Lint (b. 1951)

“The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words.”

—Philip K. Dick (1928–1982)

“The truth is not wonderful enough to suit the newspapers, so they enlarge upon it, and invent ridiculous embellishments.”

—Annie Sullivan (1866–1936)

“Don’t hate the media, become the media.”

—Jello Biafra (b. 1958)

“Age is something that doesn’t matter, unless you are a cheese.”

—Billie Burke (1884–1970)

“Live your life and forget your age.”

—Norman Vincent Peale (1898–1993)

**Handa dāni bhikkhave
amantayāmi
vo vayadhammā
sakhārā appamādena
saṃpādatha.**

**[All things are impermanent.
Work out your own
salvation with diligence.]**

— Buddha (ca. 6th century BCE)

“The old begin to complain of the conduct of the young when they themselves are no longer able to set a bad example.”

—François de la Rochefoucauld (1613–1680)

“There is always time to make right what is wrong.”

—Susan Griffin (b. 1943)

“People like you and I, though mortal of course like everyone else, do not grow old no matter how long we live...[We] never cease to stand like curious children before the great mystery into which we were born.”

—Albert Einstein (1879–1936)

“The great secret that all old people share is that you really haven’t changed in seventy or eighty years. Your body changes, but you don’t change at all. And that, of course, causes great confusion.”

—Doris Lessing (b. 1919)

“Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes.”

—Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)

“In youth we learn; in age we understand.”

—Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (1830–1916)

“I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.”

—John Dewey (1859–1952)

“But though an old man, I am but a young gardener.”

—Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

“The Chymists are a strange Class of Mortals, impelled by an incomprehensible Impulse to take their Pleasure amid Smoke and Vapour, Fume and Flame, Poisons and Poverty—yet among all these Evils, I seem to live so sweetly that may I die if I would change places with the Persian King!”

—Johann J. Becher (1635–1682)

“[...T]hrough my LSD experience and my new picture of reality, I became aware of the wonder of creation, the magnificence of nature and of the animal and plant kingdom. I became very sensitive to what will happen to all this and all of us.”

—Albert Hofmann (1906–2008)