

**Selected Members of the CCL-EAR Committee Review
Of Auto Repair Reference Center
September, 2003**

In September 2003, selected members of the California Community College Libraries, Electronic Access to Information Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of EBSCO Publishing's Auto Repair Reference Center.

EBSCO Publishing has partnered with Point 5 Technologies to create Auto Repair Reference Center(tm). The information in this database contains complete automotive repair information supplied by Nichols Publishing, publisher of Chilton information. Auto Repair Reference Center contains information on most major manufacturers of domestic and imported vehicles, with repair information for most vintage makes starting as far back as 1954. Database content includes approximately 23,000 vehicles covered from 1954 to present; over 100,000 factory drawings and step-by-step photographs; over 60,000 technical service bulletins & recalls issued by the original equipment vehicle manufacturer; wiring diagrams for easy viewing and printing; specifications & maintenance schedules; Labor Time Guide & Estimator; Quick Tips, a complete guide to vehicle ownership & maintenance; unlimited remote access and much more. New repair procedures and updates will also be added continuously.

Selected members of the CCL-EAR Committee, independently or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staffs, reviewed and evaluated EBSCO's Auto Repair Reference Center. Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member(s) only and not transferred to others. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the proposal to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Attributes of the information resources were assessed on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing the "least value" and 4 representing the "most value." The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

SEARCH INTERFACE

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

USER SUPPORT SERVICES

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone help line available?

COST

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

#1 ---- No Support

#2 ---- No Support at this time. Future support conditional upon enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 ---- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College libraries for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below in Comments Section.

#4 ---- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campus libraries or their acceptance or rejection.

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review as well as comments taken from the individual Review Reply Forms.

INFORMATION DATABASE : 4, 4

The Auto Repair Reference Center is a collection of Chilton Repair Manuals in e-books format. This collection contains Chilton Repair Manuals on domestic and imported vehicles from 1954 to the present. Approximately 23,000 vehicles are covered in this collection. Each manual include detailed information and diagrams to repair and maintain a vehicle, plus wiring diagrams.

In addition to the technical information Auto Repair Reference Center includes a labor time guide and estimator, recall bulletins, and maintenance schedules.

Overall, this is a comprehensive collection of auto repair and maintenance information with easy to follow directions and a plethora of diagrams.

The best feature of the Auto Repair Reference Center (ARRC) is the auto repair content. ARRC contains maintenance, step by step parts replacement, on car adjustments, technical service bulletins and recalls, repair procedures and wiring diagrams.

The online content in ARRC is organized into four topic areas: Repair Procedures, Service Bulletins, Wiring Diagrams, and Labor.

The Labor section is intended for the user to enter approximate hourly rates and a diagnostic rate to calculate how long a certain repair should take and how much labor and diagnostics should cost. I found this section very confusing. An online user manual or help section is needed to explain how to enter, adjust and interpret the labor and diagnostic rate.

The Service Bulletin section includes over 60,000 technical service bulletins and recalls that are issued by the original equipment vehicle manufacturer. Both the Service Bulletins and Wiring Diagrams content is provided in Portable Document Format (PDF). This information loaded quickly and was easily printed or saved. I did find that wiring diagrams weren't available for some Toyota models after 1996.

The repair procedure manuals provide easy to follow clear step by step repair instructions including photographs and drawings. In most printed professional technician service manuals there are specification charts that include: engine, tune up, piston & ring, wheel & tire, crankshaft, brake, ball joint and wheel alignment specifications. These vehicle specification charts were not included in ARRC. Also the number of vehicle repair manuals from 1954 to 1961 is very limited with only Volkswagen being included.

Another content section in ARRC is the Care and Repair Tip section. This section has 34 general automotive content areas that include Buying and Owning a Vehicle, Air Conditioning Systems, Ignition, Fuel and Electrical Systems. Each topic area includes more specific subject information. An example being the Air Conditioning Systems which included information on "How the Air Conditioner Works", Governmental Regulations, Safety Precautions, and Air Conditioning Maintenance.

SEARCH INTERFACE: 3, 3

To find the manual for a 1998 Mazda Protégé LX one goes through a series of steps; first choosing the date (1998), then make (Mazda), model (Protégé), and finally type (LX). Once the specific vehicle is chosen the repair manual is displayed as an e-book.

The manual is broken into four topics: Repair procedures, Wiring Diagrams, Service Bulletins & Recalls and Labor.

The Repair procedures topic can be accessed using two methods-browse and keyword search. The default search interface is to browse the collection. The user uses a left-hand pane to navigate by chapter, then sub-chapter. For anyone used to using the Chilton manuals in print format this will be an intuitive way to navigate.

The other option is to search the manual by keyword. The keyword search feature needs to be refined. There is a lack of authority control for keyword searches. So the result list contains many non-related topics. For instance, the search "oil filter replacement" returned X number of results. Most of these results were unrelated to replacing an oil filter.

The wiring diagram topic is browsed by selecting the year/make/model of the vehicle. This is a little redundant because I had already selected a year/make/model (e.g. 1998 Mazda Protégé LX) to get to this point. The desired wiring diagram displays as PDF file.

Under the Service Bulletin & Recall Topic users can view recall notices for a vehicle by browsing by sub-topic. All the sub-topics are displayed for each vehicle regardless of whether there is a recall notice or not. This seems a bit unnecessary. I had to click on 29 sub-categories just to find out that there were no recall notices for the vehicle I selected. It would be useful if this feature would display only the categories relevant to the vehicle

The Labor Topic allows the user to calculate an estimate for vehicle repairs/maintenance. The user is prompted to submit the hourly labor and diagnostic rates. After the rates have been entered the user chooses the type of repair/maintenance needed and an estimate of costs is generated. This is an easy to follow feature, however, the user must know their local repair shops hourly rate for labor and diagnostic service.

One overall disappointment with the interface is there is no email option. Users must print-out any needed information or diagrams. An email option would be helpful and is standard in most databases.

The repair manual section has four topic areas called, Repair Procedures, Wiring Diagrams, Service Bulletins & Recalls and Labor. The Repair Procedures topic section was the only section that could be searched or browsed using a contents list of repair topics located in the left frame of the database. The search interface uses OR as its default search logic. The terms *brake booster* returned over 60 topic pages with most unrelated to the search topic. You could not enter a simple search phrase and get meaningful results. A search for *disc brake* returned a results list locating pages with the terms *disconnect* and *discharge*.

The more intuitive way of using ARRC is to browse the collection using the left hand frame navigating from chapters into sub-chapters.

The topic areas of Wiring Diagrams and Service Bulletins can only be browsed. All wiring diagrams and service bulletins are presented as PDF documents that can be printed.

Another information choice in ARRC is the Care and Repair Tips section located in the upper right corner of the interface. This section opens a new browser window and has 34 browsable general automotive maintenance and repair topics. You can also search these topics by keyword. The default search operator for keyword searching is an OR search. In order to narrow search results you must include an AND in between search terms. ARRC does not include any online help, or search examples to help with using the search interface. This content area also doesn't provide users with a method of navigating back into the ARRC. The user must close their browser window in order to return to the main ARRC sections.

The ability to e-mail content and instructions on how to save information is needed throughout ARRC.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 1, 1

There was an overall lack of help information for this database. There was no online help available or links to technical support information.

No documentation or online help is available with ARRC. User support information would greatly improve the usability of this product.

COST: N/A

Cost unknown at this time.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 3

I experienced no problems accessing this database and the response time was adequate.

The connect was very stable and response time was very good using both Netscape and Internet Explorer.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: 2, 2

This database has great information that would support schools offering a curriculum in auto repair. If a user is familiar with using a print auto repair manual, navigating this collection should be straightforward. However, due to the limited scope of this database, I don't think there would be enough demand statewide to offer this through the consortium.

The information in this database is very useful for the automotive repair technician working in a repair shop or students studying automobile repair. The labor time and estimator sections could be useful in an automotive service or training location.

For a library patron not familiar with the subject area the lack of support materials in ARRC presents a problem in successfully locating information. Without any online technical support materials or telephone support this also creates a problem for library staff answering questions for patrons.

Rating for Home Campus Only: 2, 3

Since my campus does not offer courses in auto repair, this database would not be purchased.

My college offers a certificate program in automotive repair. For students studying automotive repair I would recommend this product. ARRC would be a very helpful resource in any location that services automobiles. I have some reservations in recommending it for use in the library. Until improvements are made in the keyword search and user support sections this product may create a situation where the reference librarian would need to provide individual instruction to each patron.