

# Erowid Extracts

DOCUMENTING THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND PSYCHOACTIVES

June 2006

Number 10

EROWID.ORG is a member-supported 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.

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**E**XPERIENCE is a dynamic fusion of perception, interpretation, and memory, unified into apparent coherence by the mind. Psychoactives are things that affect perception, interpretation, memory, mind, and experience.

At the same time psychoactives are being experienced, the perception, interpretation and memory of their effects are being altered. Despite this recursive intermingling, self-reported experience is a primary source of data about how psychoactive plants, chemicals, practices, and technologies affect the mind.

While the sciences of consciousness studies and brain research continue to improve in their ability to externally measure and interpret brain activity, finding out what's going on in the *mind* often comes down to very simple questions that only an individual can answer, such as: "How do you feel?" or "What are you thinking?"

Not only are we unable to identify with certainty what someone is thinking without asking them, we are also far from being able to reliably predict the effect most psychoactives will have on a given person's mind and their experience of the world. It is currently just as impossible to give someone a pill or run a piece of software that causes them to think about "peace" as it is to find out whether they *were* thinking about peace without relying on their personal response.

The self-report remains central to nearly all studies of the mind. This centrality means everyone can be a kind of expert in the study of psychoactives: an expert in their own view of the world and the effects a plant or chemical has on their thoughts.

Not everyone is a good reporter. Not everyone has the skills to be aware of and accurately note their own internal

process, nor can everyone describe internal experience articulately.

An increase and improvement in reporting of first-person experience is essential to the developing science of psychoactives. There is no practical way to find out if someone has ever taken LSD, let alone find out whether they think it was a good idea, without simply asking them. And that is fraught with problems.

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**"Owing to the fact that all experience is a process, no point of view can ever be the last one."**

— William James

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Both common sense and the work of researchers using self-reporting methodologies like Descriptive Experience Sampling (see "Communicating Experience", p. 20) suggest that people can be trained to better understand and communicate their own experience. Simple psychoactive practices like meditation may not only provide a degree of control over the mind, but may also help people become better self-observers, in turn improving their ability to report on internal mental states.

This issue of *Erowid Extracts* focuses on the primacy of personal experience: the survey as measurement, meditation as tool, and the first-person report as transcript. Erowid continues the effort to improve the quality and breadth of information about the psychoactive experience.

Keep it coming!

*Fire & Earth*

# Recent News & Updates

## Google & Federal Subpoenas

In 2005, Google's search records were subpoenaed by the U.S. Justice Department. The Justice Department demanded that Google provide one million random web addresses as well as records of what terms were searched on by Google users during any one week period. Ostensibly, this information would be used to help fight child pornography.

Though the requested information did not specifically identify individuals doing searches, Google refused to comply. Yahoo, AOL, and Microsoft complied with similar subpoenas.

On March 17, 2006, federal judge James Ware denied the Justice Department's demands. The judge decided that no search terms and only 50,000 randomly selected URLs from the Google database need be turned over to assist the government in its work against child pornography. One basis for this ruling was that Google would lose some level of users' trust by turning over such information (regardless of the fact that such disclosure would not violate the letter of Google's privacy policy) and that such a loss of trust outweighed the marginal value of the full set of data that the government requested.

Though not a complete win, we are pleased that the judge supported even this level of privacy. This issue highlights, yet again, the reason why we have chosen not to fund Erowid with on screen advertisements. Google currently runs one of the largest online advertising programs in existence. Any site that serves Google ads also provides Google with specific information about what page each ad is displayed on, and identifying data about who (by IP address) viewed each page on which an ad was displayed.

In a privacy-sensitive field such as ours, we continue to choose protecting our visitors over income. This case is a sobering reminder that "private" online activities only *appear* private; corporations can quietly turn their records over to the government at any time. Future Google executives could reverse their decision and hand over user records stretching back to the company's inception.

## Halperngate?

During the January 2006 LSD Symposium in Basel, a controversy erupted when Mark McCloud, celebrated blotter art collector and rabble rouser, accused Dr. John H. Halpern, a researcher working closely with the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, of being a DEA agent. Although dismissed by Rick Doblin, MAPS President, as being "paranoid", charges of cooperation in DEA investigations are taken very seriously by people who work closely with with illegal drug users.

Dr. Halpern has worked with Native American Church members, studied an MDMA-using group in Utah, participated in psychedelic crisis counseling at Burning Man, and has upcoming research potentially giving MDMA and psychedelics to patients at Harvard Medical School. It is because of his crossover between "legitimate" research and the subculture that many members of the psychedelic community have closely examined allegations that Dr. Halpern was involved in helping the DEA with the infamous "Kansas silo" LSD bust of 2000.

At the end of March 2006, Jon Hanna wrote an article for *The Entheogen Review*, titled "Halperngate", that presents a sober overview of the situation.<sup>1,2</sup> Unfortunately, many of the details remain shrouded by the wall of silence that Dr. Halpern has chosen to stand behind. The drug war creates situations so difficult that no one can say for certain they'd be willing to forgo their future to protect their friends. Although the issues are complex, it seems untenable for someone like Halpern to work so closely with the subculture and yet be unwilling to publicly discuss his actions.

We have created a Character Vault for Dr. Halpern to help document his work and this issue. We hope that he will eventually change his mind and decide to publicly discuss this awkward and difficult subject and honestly integrate it into his current career.

## References

1. Hanna J. "Halperngate." *The Entheogen Review*. 2006;15(1):9-16.
2. Erowid.org/characters/halpern\_john/

## Salvia divinorum Legality

The suicide of 17-year-old Brett Chidester in Delaware has caused a recent upsurge in mainstream media coverage of *Salvia divinorum* as a "dangerous legal high". Although there was no direct connection between Brett's use of *S. divinorum* and his suicide, which may have occurred months after his last use, major news sources took the opportunity to brand it a "deadly drug".

Unfortunately, news agencies appeared to accept Brett's mother's diagnosis that the plant caused his death. "It's the only thing that can explain it", she said in one report. On April 13, 2006, CNN ran a five-minute segment about Brett's death titled "A Fatal Dose?". Introductory graphics for the program announced that *Salvia divinorum* is "Deadly... and Legal".

Curiously, on May 9, 2006, nearly four months after Brett's suicide, "Dr. Adrienne Sekula-Perlman, deputy chief medical examiner in Delaware, revised Chidester's death certificate to add 'Salvia divinorum use' as a contributing cause of his death."

This is particularly troublesome if there is no additional information that *S. divinorum* was directly (or indirectly) related to Brett's death. Listing it on the death certificate provides the weight of "medical science" to what appears to be a medically baseless claim. If the hospital where Brett was examined participates in the Drug Abuse Warning Network surveys, this could result in *S. divinorum* incorrectly showing up in national statistics about drug-related deaths.

After the news coverage, Delaware legislators quickly added *Salvia divinorum* to Schedule I. Most disturbing, perhaps, was a comment by a Delaware State Police commander, quoted by the *Delaware News Journal*, on how the ban can now be used to "crack down on overall drug abuse even if *Salvia* is rarely encountered." He said, "If we do run into it, it's another hammer we can put on people." ●

## References

1. Chalmers M. "Salvia's banned, but now the tough part." *Delaware News Journal*. May 6, 2006;15(1):9-16.

I just wanted to say thanks. I have been visiting your site since 10th grade and I am a junior Horticulture major in college now. Erowid is largely responsible for this. It led me to discover all the fascinating plants that man has used throughout the ages. From cultivating some of these at home, I realized how interesting all plants are in general and decided to pursue a career in horticulture/botany. Keep up the good work!

— SPYDER  
*Erowid Member*

Yeah, i do have a problem, there are kids on the Internet, and it is very easy to access [sic] this site where it shows you how to make crack. Then after it tells you how to make it, it says that it can kill you... your not to [sic] fucking smart, i'm pissed!

— JILL  
*Erowid Email*

Did I tell you I was wearing my Erowid T-shirt in Prague and someone stopped me to chat about it? I was traveling in Germany for a meeting and I took a short trip into the Czech Republic. I was last there (I think) in 1975 and I wanted to see how it had changed.

So I was walking around Prague when this couple walked up and started talking. My Slovak wasn't good, but I gathered from the man's enthusiastic gesturing that he was a real fan of yours. My friend translated, but no translation was really necessary; they use [Erowid] to learn about the stuff they used.

— ANONYMOUS PHYSICIAN  
*Erowid Email*

One time I came across a website where a bunch of burn out losers talk about getting wasted. Why don't you people get jobs and be productive instead of sniffing your brother's model airplane glue all day.

— ANONYMOUS  
*Submitted via Experience Vaults*

The nice thing about this site is that you can get information on legal drugs, like *Salvia*, from a variety of perspectives. Other people's experiences, medical and pharmacological data, etc.

— JENESTA  
*Stumbleupon.com Review*

Thank you so much for providing reliable information about psychoactive plants and chemicals, including marijuana and other drugs. I tell people all the time, if you get caught lying to a kid about a drug, they assume you're lying about all drugs.

Kids today aren't stupid, they make bad choices sometimes, I think we all do from time to time. Educating kids with the truth is the only way to reduce the harm from drugs. They shouldn't have their life destroyed by a felony drug charge. You can get over an addiction; you never get over a conviction.

Thanks for what you do.  
— E. JAY FLEMING  
Law Enforcement Against Prohibition  
*Erowid Email*

I have visited this website every day for the past 4 or 5 years. It has saved my life and plenty of my friends' lives just by the knowledge we've attained [...]. This website is a blessing from God. I am a current drug user and have been for the past 9 years and I have always looked to this website for information on substances before I would use them, to make sure it could be safe or to research. I have gained so much knowledge from this site it is amazing. [...] this website is very vital for everyone especially our youth.

— BLAKE  
*Erowid Guestbook Entry*

Two things in my past: use of hallucinogenic, psychoactive fungi in my youth; study of chemistry to degree level. See the connection? I gave up on the former in 1982 after some bad trips and moved on from chemistry after becoming involved in waste management engineering in 1992. Nevertheless, I retain a nostalgic interest in the chemistry of psilocybin and related compounds. This site is fascinating.

— LINCOLYNX  
*Stumbleupon.com Review*

From a spiritual rather than recreational standpoint, this site is invaluable. I don't use entheogens (I prefer drumming), but this is where I send anyone considering them to begin research.

— DESERTDRUM  
*Stumbleupon.com Review*

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Erowid  
P.O. Box 1116  
Grass Valley, CA 95945  
<http://www.erowid.org>  
[info@erowid.org](mailto:info@erowid.org)

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

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# EROWID VISITORS ON LSD

THE RESULTS OF EIGHT LSD-RELATED SURVEYS  
CONDUCTED ON EROWID BETWEEN OCT 2005 AND JAN 2006

BY FIRE & EARTH EROWID

One of Erowid's key goals is to maintain a two-way flow of information with our visitors. Because of the large number of Erowid visitors—approximately 50,000 each day—we are in a unique position to collect and filter valuable information about the culture surrounding psychoactive use.

## Previous Surveys on Erowid

Over the last few years, Erowid has conducted a number of online surveys about the use of psychoactive plants and chemicals. Our first major survey concerned the use of psilocybin mushrooms and other psychedelics in treating severe migraine-like headaches called “cluster headaches”. This ongoing survey has been

that “ecstasy users think the drug is completely safe”.

We have also done some interesting survey work with Matthew Baggott, a researcher in San Francisco. One administered two years ago (about which we published an article in the June 2004 issue of *Erowid Extracts*) examined use of *Salvia divinorum*. We have also conducted two surveys looking at Hallucinogen Persisting Perceptual Disorder (HPPD), the results of which are pending publication.

## Why LSD Surveys?

Our aim was to conduct a series of LSD-related surveys to gather data about current use for the occasion of Albert Hofmann's 100th birthday.

ever happened to them? Do they still use LSD? If not, why not?

While it is difficult to glean details about the earliest users of LSD, we can gather this information from current users and make the information available for future generations. More than ever before, it is possible today to just ask LSD users what they think.

## Survey Limitations

As with any survey, there are inherent limitations to the data we collect. Our survey population consists of self-selected Erowid visitors, a very specific sub-set of the world's population. Because people from this group are actively seeking information about psychoactives, they are more likely to use illegal substances than a random sampling of the general population. Survey respondents must also have Internet access, and be able to read English, resulting in under-representation of certain demographics. Respondents must also be willing to fill out surveys about illegal substance use, which may preclude the more cautious from participating.

We have taken several steps to help improve survey process, such as repeating identical questions on multiple surveys to compare results. We also try, as often as possible, to include options of “Don't know” and “Prefer not to answer”. Finally, we identify inconsistent and absurd answers, and exclude those responses from our results.

It is worth noting that a recent article published in *Addictive Behaviors* by McCabe *et al.* found that Internet surveys may yield very similar results to mail-in surveys, yet with higher response rates. This suggests, that from a methodological standpoint, online surveys may not be

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“LSD made me take a whole different perspective on everyday life and gave me a more positive outlook on the future.”

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running for more than three years and has received over 200 promising responses—a respectable number, given the rarity of both the condition and the small likelihood that sufferers would have tried psychedelics as a treatment. This survey has helped lead to more formal research, including a soon-to-be published summary of the survey findings and follow-up contact with survey respondents by Dr. Andrew Sewell of Harvard Medical School.

In 2002, we conducted a survey about the perception of risk among Ecstasy users, the results of which were published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.<sup>1</sup> The survey refuted often-repeated and unsupported claims in scientific and medical journals

In the early days of LSD, many users congregated in relatively isolated small enclaves, with little communication between them. Now, after more than fifty years of LSD use around the world, there is both a massive untapped history surrounding the use of LSD and the technological means (the Internet) to begin collecting it in a rigorous fashion.

One of the major questions that led to the start of Erowid itself was, “What do people who used psychedelics ten, twenty, or thirty years ago think of that use now?” Knowing what individuals from the previous generation of LSD users think about their use could be valuable to those contemplating trying LSD in the future. Do most people regret their use, or was it the best thing that

inherently inferior to traditional anonymous survey methods.<sup>2</sup>

## Results

We conducted eight separate LSD-related surveys between October 2005 and January 2006, most of which collected responses for 3–7 days. Six of the eight surveys were “micro-surveys” consisting of 3–4 questions each, displayed at the top of nearly all pages on the Erowid.org website, ensuring a high response rate. Each micro-survey yielded between 3,000 and 6,000 responses per 24-hour period that it was displayed. The other two surveys were identical and longer, attempting to identify trends in current LSD availability. We received a total of 136,057 responses to the eight surveys; 123,459 of these (90.7%) were determined to be valid after the removal of spam, duplicates, and invalid responses.

having taken LSD (70.3–75.8%). One explanation for this is that people who have never taken LSD were less interested in filling out a longer LSD-related survey. This is a small hint at the complications of sampling bias: even in well-controlled surveys, those with strong opinions or a personal history with the subject matter may be more motivated to take the time and energy to participate.

### Positive vs. Negative (9,439 valid responses)

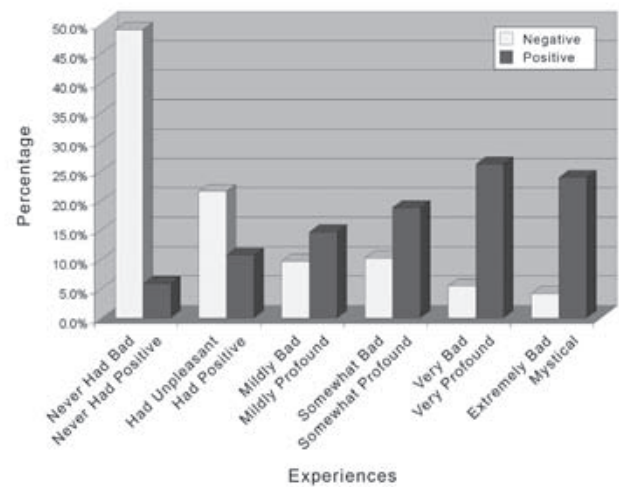
Of all respondents, to this micro-survey, 62.8% reported having taken LSD at least once. Of these, 14.5% report having experienced at least one “very” or “extremely” “bad trip”, 20.8% report having had at worst a “mild” or “somewhat” bad trip, and 64.4% report that they have never had a bad trip.

On the other hand, 57.7% report having had a “mystical” or “very profound” positive experience, while 28.3% have had at best a “relatively mild” or “somewhat profound” positive experience, and 13.4% have never had what they would consider a “mystical” or “strikingly positive” experience of any kind.

Across all LSD-using respondents, nearly four times as many (57.7%) report having had a “mystical” or “very profound” positive experience than report having had a “very” or “extremely” bad trip (14.5%). Higher total lifetime use was correlated with an increased likelihood of very positive and very negative experiences. Among respondents who had used LSD more than 25 times, 79.4% reported having had at least one “mystical” or “very profound” positive experience while 27.6% reported having had at least one “very” or “extremely” bad trip.

Some of this disparity between reported positive and

FIG. 1: “BAD TRIPS” VS. “MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES” AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE TRIED LSD 1–25 TIMES

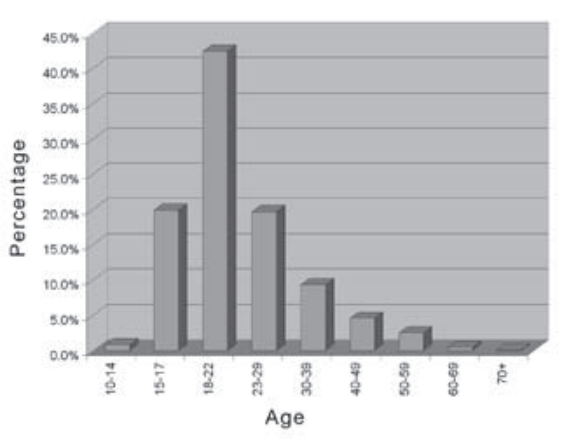


negative experiences may be due to a loss of interest in psychedelics among people who have had bad experiences; this could result in those individuals being underrepresented in a survey of Erowid visitors. But it is also possible that those who have had the worst experiences with LSD might be the most likely to seek information about it online. Determining this is outside the scope of these surveys.

### Effects on Life (49,039 valid responses)

Of those who have taken LSD, 53.4% said that it has affected their life positively, compared to 3.4% who said it had a negative effect on their life. 21.9% reported that LSD had “no effect” and 17.2% reported a “mix of positive and negative effects”.

FIG. 2: AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



The large majority of respondents were in the 15–30 year age bracket, a demographic that most other sources agree is the peak age for LSD use.

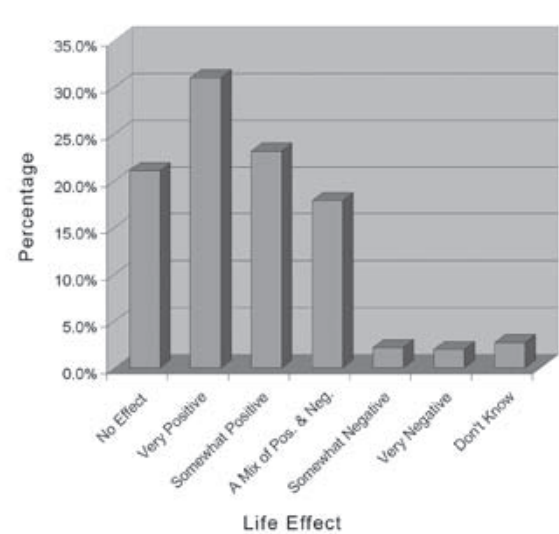
### How Many Have Tried LSD?

We asked the same question, “How many times have you taken LSD”, in five different surveys spanning the four-month period. Responses were relatively consistent across these five surveys.

In micro-surveys, 62.0–64.6% of respondents reported having taken LSD at least once. Compare this to approximately 10% of the U.S. population over the age of 12 that report LSD use when asked as part of the government-sponsored National Household Survey.<sup>3</sup>

The two longer-format surveys showed higher percentages of respondents who report

FIG. 3: HOW HAS LSD AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?



Interestingly, people who have taken LSD 100+ times were the most likely to say that it has “very positively” affected their life (46.9%). An additional 17.4% said LSD has affected their life “somewhat positively”, and 21.2% reported a “mix of positive and negative” effects. Also, people who have taken LSD 100 or more times are more likely than any other group to say that their LSD use has affected their life “somewhat negatively” (1.4%) or “very negatively” (2.6%).

Not surprisingly, people who have taken LSD 100+ times were least likely to say that LSD had “no effect” on their life (6.7%) compared to 29.7% of those who have taken LSD 1–10 times.

When answering how long ago they first took LSD, 24.8% of respondents said it was in the past year, compared to those who said 2–5 years ago (34.8%), 6–10 years ago (16.9%), 11–20 years ago (14.6%), and more than 20 years ago (8.9%). We found no consistent trend in correlation between years since first LSD experience and perceived positive or negative effects.

“LSD has opened up my mind and made me fearless to the unknown.”

**Recent Use**  
(11,757 valid responses)

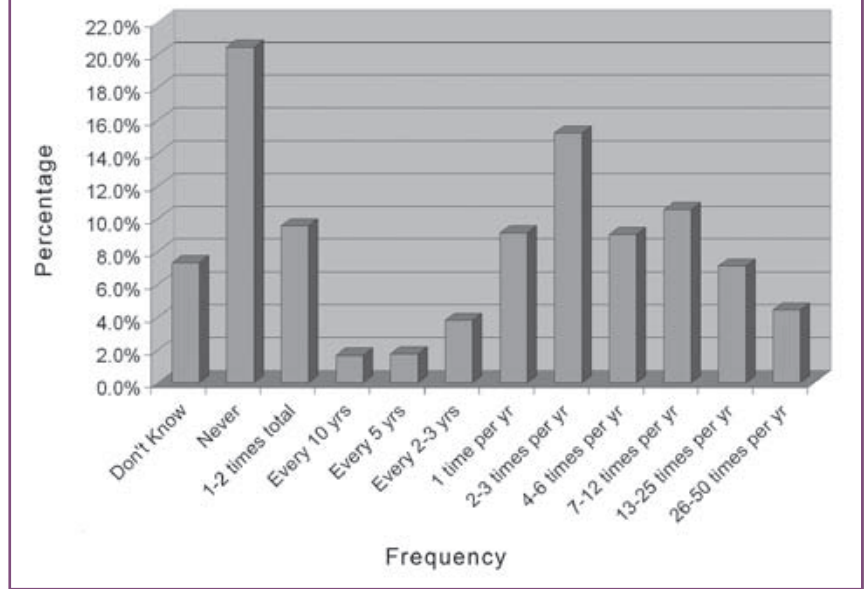
We attempted to get a sense of respondent age, in relation to frequency of LSD use, and how long ago they first tried LSD.

Results for respondent age were fairly consistent between this and other surveys we have conducted: 20.8% were 10–18 years old, 42.4% 18–22 years old, and 36.8% older than 22.

Overall, 41.6% of respondents reported having taken LSD in the last five years. The longer ago they first tried LSD, the less likely they were to have taken it recently: 55.1% of those who first tried LSD 5–20 years ago had taken it in the last five years, while only 17.1% of those who first took LSD more than 30 years ago also reported having taken it in the last five years.

The 18- to 22-year-old group was the most likely to have taken LSD in the past five years (69.8%) compared to 15- to 17-year-olds (60.0%) and 23- to 29-year-olds (65.7%). A much lower portion (19.5%) of

FIG. 4: HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU TAKE LSD IF IT WERE LEGAL?



50- to 59-year-olds reported having used LSD during that period.

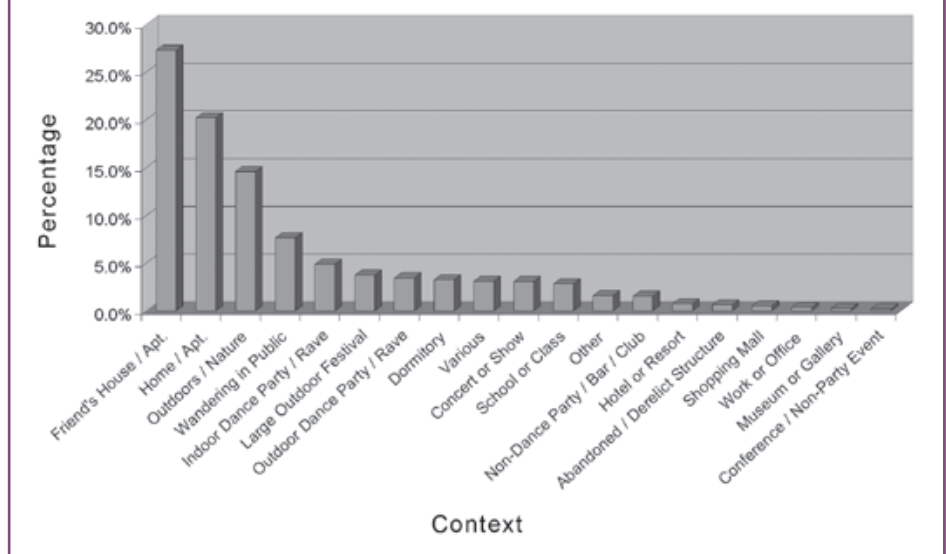
**Does Legal Status Affect Use?**  
(33,957 valid responses)

One question that is difficult to address is to what extent LSD’s legal status affects use levels. Generally, we might expect illegality to disproportionately deter older users, as this population has more to lose by breaking the law and generally would find less peer support for illegal activity. So we asked age, number of times LSD had been taken in the last five years, and, “If LSD were legal, about how often would you take it?”

In response to that last question, 20.4% of respondents said “never”, while 16.8% said less than once a year, 33.4% said 1–6 times per year, and 22.1% said seven or more times per year.

The frequency with which respondents said they would take LSD if it were legal was inversely proportional to age. Only 13.4% of 18- to 22-year-olds said they would “never” take LSD if it were legal, compared to 49.2% of 60- to 69-year-olds. Of 18- to 22-year-olds, 60.9% said they would take LSD at least once a year if it were legal, compared to 55.6% of those 23–29, 48.3% of those 30–39, 40.8% of those 40–49, 39.2%

FIG. 5: CONTEXT OF FIRST LSD EXPERIENCE



of those 50–59, and 35.8% of those 60–69.

**Context of Use**  
(16,166 valid responses)

In order to get a sense of how and where people use LSD, we next asked a series of questions about contexts of LSD use, including, “What was the primary context for your first LSD experience?”, “How many people were present in this context?”, and “What is your preferred context for taking LSD?”.

Nearly 75% of all respondents had their first LSD experience in one of the top five location types: at a “friend’s house” (27.2%), “home” (20.2%), “outdoors, nature” (14.6%), “wandering in public” (7.7%), or “indoor dance party, rave” (4.9%). A total of 17 different contexts were provided as options. We were pleased that the results were as low as they were for “school or class” (3.0%), and “work or office” (0.4%).

Consistent with the fact that 47.4% of all respondents report having first taken LSD either at a friend’s house or at their own home, a setting suitable for small groups of people, 40.8% also report that there were 3–5 people present when they first took LSD. Of the subgroup whose first experience was at a friend’s house, 55.1% reported that there were 3–5 people present.

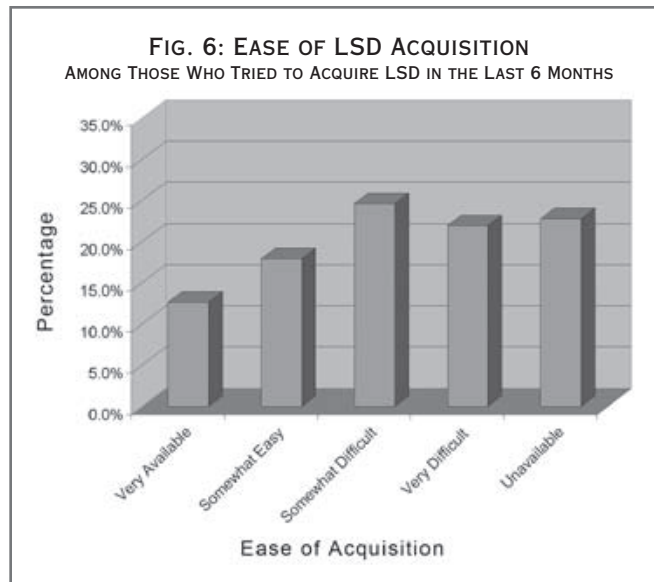
When asked what their preferred context was for LSD experiences, the most frequent answers were “outdoors, nature” (29.9%), “home” (21.6%), and “friend’s house” (11.6%).

There was a trend towards respondents preferring the context in which they first took LSD. Of those who first took LSD “outdoors”, 58.1% also selected “outdoors” as their preferred context, compared to 29.9% of all respondents or 15.2% of those whose first experience was at an “indoor dance party or rave”.

It is unknown whether this correlation stems from people choosing to first use the drug in a context that suits their temperament, or if the first use imprints a preference that is later expressed through subsequent use.

**Availability, Quality, & Price**  
(3,101 valid responses)

LSD availability has reportedly been low for the last few years. Many people attribute this to the infamous “Kansas silo” LSD bust



in the United States in late 2000, but several major LSD manufacturing convictions in the 1990s probably contributed to the reduced availability as well.

U.S. national surveys show a declining trend in LSD use starting around the same time.<sup>4</sup> Between 2000 and 2003, Monitoring

last six months than among those who had not. In the more recent survey, 22.7% of those who had recently tried to acquire LSD said it was “available”, “somewhat easy”, or “very easy” to acquire, compared to 12.1% of those who had not tried buying LSD. Respondents who had attempted to acquire LSD in the last six months were also asked how difficult it had been to find LSD during that period. In the first availability survey, 29.2% replied that they had found LSD “very available” or “somewhat easy” to find, 47.0% said it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to find, and 23.8% said it was “unavailable”.

In the second availability survey, 30.6% of respondents said LSD was “very available” or “somewhat easy” to find, 46.6% said it was “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to find, and 22.8% said it was “unavailable”. These numbers suggest that LSD availability may be increasing, which would be consistent

*“LSD showed me that there is a vastly interesting world that lies just beneath our own, where the mundane can become fantastic and the experiences of the ‘day-to-day’ can be drastically enhanced. After taking LSD, I felt more in tune with the aesthetics that make life truly incredible.”*

the Future showed an unprecedented drop in past-year LSD use by high school seniors (18-year-olds), from 6.6% to 1.9%.

During the same period, the National Household Survey’s measure of how many people first try LSD each year dropped from 788,000 to 320,000. Similarly, between 2000 and 2002, DAWN emergency department mentions related to LSD dropped from 4,016 to 891.

To learn more, we conducted two identical longer surveys spaced three months apart (October 2005 and January 2006) with questions focusing on LSD availability. Of those who responded to the two availability surveys, 72.5% reported trying to acquire LSD in the past six months. In both surveys, perceived availability was higher among those who had actually tried to acquire LSD in the

with recent rumors. It will take a number of additional identical surveys to determine whether this is a real trend.

In the second of these surveys, 78.5% of those who had recently acquired LSD

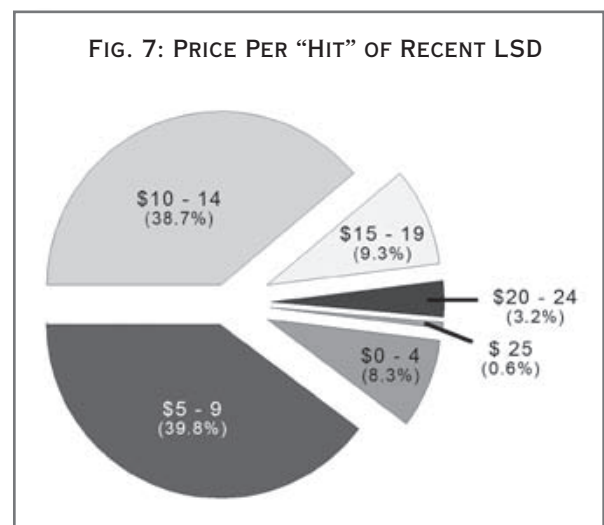
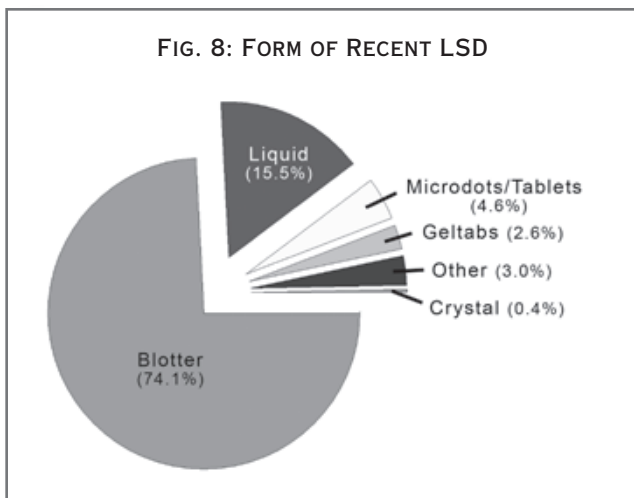


FIG. 8: FORM OF RECENT LSD



reported paying between \$5 and \$14 per “dose or hit”. Only 3.8% paid more than \$20 and 8.3% reported paid less than \$5 per “hit”. Prices remained very consistent in the three months between surveys, with a slight trend towards lower prices.

“Blotter” was by far the most common form of LSD purchased (74.1%), followed

inseparable when discussing the street use of acid. Therefore, we assume that these two factors are combined in the following answers.

In general, perceived “quality” of street LSD was quite a bit higher than we expected: 38.5% of respondents reported that the material they had recently acquired

“Asking me how acid has affected me is asking me how I have come to grips with my understanding of being. I have come to an acceptance of it rather well and I have utilized that to my advantage over time.”

by “liquid” (15.5%), “microdots/tablets” (4.6%), and “geltabs/windowpane” (2.6%). The second survey showed an increase in availability of LSD in liquid form (+3.5%) and a decrease of microdots/tablets

was of either “very high” or “high” quality, compared to 22.9% that reported the quality was “low”, “very low”, or “inactive”. Another 30.0% said that the quality was “average”.

Perceived quality remained quite consistent over the three-month period between the two surveys. Assigning each response a numerical value of 1–6, with the survey response of “average” set equal to 4.0, the reported quality of LSD rose minutely from an average of 4.13 to 4.15 between surveys.

#### Future Surveys

We were quite happy with the large number of responses we received to this series of surveys as well as the fascinating data that resulted. We hope to continue conducting similar research

for a variety of psychoactive plants and chemicals. Future questions could try to determine whether LSD is more or less likely to positively impacted people’s lives than other materials such as psilocybin-containing mushrooms or MDMA. Stay tuned for more visitor surveys on Erowid in the future. ●

*Note: This article is based on a presentation given at the 2006 LSD Symposium in Basel, Switzerland. Results differ slightly because the final two surveys continued to receive responses after the conference. We also did a more thorough job of removing invalid responses for this article. For more information about these surveys, including the texts of the questions and answers, see:*

[Erowid.org/extracts/n10/survey.shtml](http://Erowid.org/extracts/n10/survey.shtml)

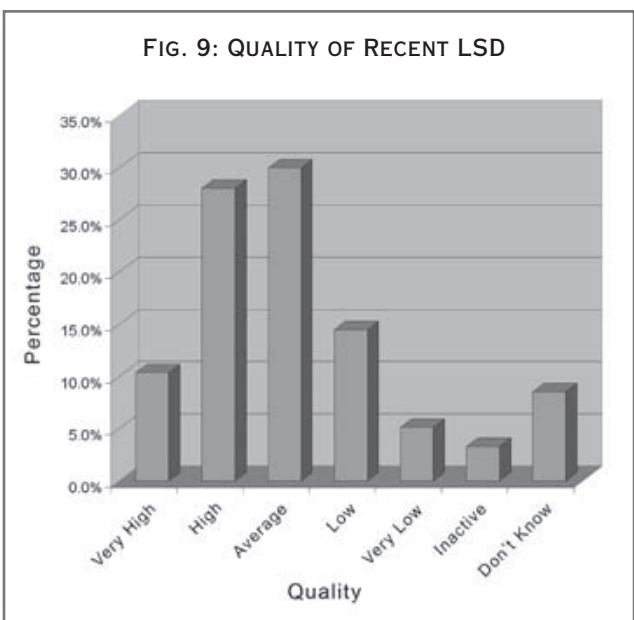
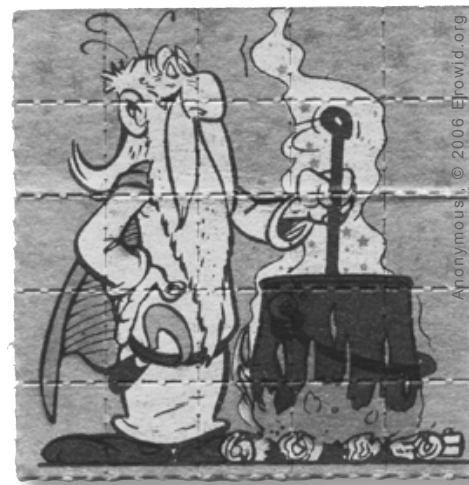


FIG. 9: QUALITY OF RECENT LSD

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# “DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS ON HOW LSD HAS AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?”

Based on the strongly positive responses we received in early surveys about the effect LSD has had on people's lives, we decided to seek more detail about what kind of effects people had seen. In the final survey, we included an open text field to allow visitors to provide short comments about how their use of LSD has affected their lives.

There is an Erowid axiom that says, “If you put up a web form, people will fill it out.” Although we say this somewhat flippantly, it reflects how many people have things they want to express and communicate about their experiences with psychoactives. We collect these in the form of experience reports, but there is also value in asking visitors to distill their thoughts down to a sentence or two. Offering just a short comment field on a survey can allow people the chance to concisely communicate their ideas and thoughts. Although we receive many short, brutish comments, we also get some elegant gems and insightful statements about complex life issues involving the use of psychoactive plants and chemicals.

We ran this micro-survey for sixteen days and received 35,419 valid responses. Out of those, 11,456 included text comments. We identified several common themes, a few of which are included below.

## CHANGED PERSPECTIVE

“LSD has opened my mind to countless possibilities. It made me more aware of the world around and within. It taught me to never accept reality at face value. It has given me a keen interest in consciousness and perception.”

“LSD gave me a new perspective on just about everything that is considered reality. It really allowed me to see the importance of many things that I took for granted. It showed me the fine line between the twisting nether of philosophy and the systematic patterns of science and walked me through both. Without the experiences I've had during unfathomable trips to the depths of my mind and back, I would never understand the world as well as I do today.”

“It made me question everything. It made me see that everyday perception is only a tiny fraction of what ‘existence’ must be made of. It humbled me.”

“My perception has been widened to an extent that cannot be expressed by words. My concepts of self, society, and spirituality, have been completely changed.”

“I wouldn't say that there were any life altering religious-esque experiences, but it definitely opened up my mind to the mysteries of the human brain.”

“It opened doors in my mind that cannot be closed.”

## SPIRITUAL / MYSTICAL INSIGHT

“I would never have comprehended the spiritual side of life without it.”

“One particularly massive dose gave me first-hand experience with what the mystics are talking about when they say, ‘We are all one’. I was not ready for that bomb, but it did not mean madness; it meant spending the next 15 years studying philosophy and experimenting with my experience of consciousness. It helped me evolve.”

“I am more aware of the energy flow.”

“I have an entirely new outlook on everything and every single part of my life. I have become a Buddhist and have taken up painting.”

“It helped me find my faith again.”

“LSD has given me a direct link to god.”

## CHANGED LIFE DIRECTION

“After my first trip, I was so profoundly affected that I called in ‘sick’ to work, saying I had been sick for a long time but now I was better. Ostensibly, I called in ‘well’ to work and never went back.”

“Taking LSD made me realize what I wanted from my life and since then, while totally sober, I've had this tremendous momentum to go out and do the things that must be done to make my aspirations reality.”

## INCREASE IN CREATIVITY

“It has helped me with the creative process and the ability to evolve ideas into reality.”

“LSD has been an interesting perceptual catalyst. The experiences I've had with LSD and other psychedelics have given me some very useful insights into different modes of artistic experience.”

“It really made me realize that the ordinary can be extraordinary.”

## INTELLECTUAL INSIGHT

“LSD has broadened my perspective on complex systems and increased my ability to seek solutions to problems.”

“I feel that LSD has given me the ability to look beyond things—to look deeper into subjects and find out what really causes things to happen. It has also led me to see that things are not always what they seem.”

## HEALTH PROBLEMS

“Hallucinogen Persisting Perceptual Disorder (HPPD) is a very real problem. I have taken a complete hiatus from psychedelics until my eyesight returns to normal.”

“LSD has basically made me insane. I have been cursed with HPPD and constant hallucinations of unexplainable things. When I try to explain what I am seeing, I sound like a complete nutball.”

“I saw more of the light and dark side of things. I felt mixed emotional ups and downs for six months to a year after the last dose.”

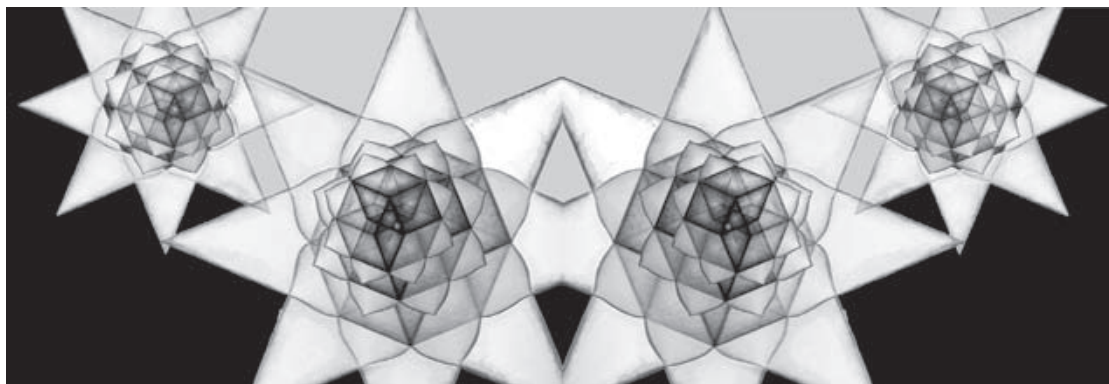
## RELATIONSHIPS / EMPATHY

“LSD made me feel more caring and respectful towards my friends and family than I ever had before. Experiencing these new and very strong emotions made a deep and lasting impression on my morals and the way I treat others.”

“It made me a happier person and less of an asshole.”

“LSD has opened my eyes to this wonderful world.”

To read more survey comments, visit:  
[Erowid.org/extracts/n10/survey\\_comments.shtml](http://Erowid.org/extracts/n10/survey_comments.shtml)



Hyper Lotus  
by Tara Sullivan  
(digital, 2004)

# JUST BREATHE

## NOTES ON THE UTILITY OF MEDITATION

BY EARTH AND FIRE EROWID

Although most of Erowid is focused on psychoactive chemicals, plants, and technologies, we also include “practices” in the list of mind alterants we document. The simplest and most accessible of psychoactive practices are meditation and intentional breathing. Unlike many plants and chemicals, meditation techniques are universally available, requiring only that one not be engaged in another attention-demanding task. The ubiquity and simplicity of these practices remind us how intrinsic mind-alteration is to human consciousness.

Not only do we consider a basic knowledge of meditative techniques and their effects to be important to understanding psychoactives, but even brief practice can provide secular, terrestrial benefits.

### Spiritual Traditions & Meditation

For many people, the concept of “meditation” is foreign and alien, associated with orange-robed monks, New-Agers, and non-Christian ideologies. Yet, in its distilled form, “meditation” is just a word that describes the intentional altering of one’s consciousness through concentration and breathing. While it is true that meditation is often taught within the framework of a spiritual tradition, where the larger meaning of the practice is rooted in metaphysics, the initial goals are generally focusing or quieting the mind.

Spiritual traditions frequently focus on longer-term metaphysical development rather than on the immediate, practical applications of these techniques. In fact, short-term benefits may be downplayed or discounted entirely as distractions. Benefits can be gained from meditative methods alone without having to subscribe to a spiritual discipline, although most meditators agree that practice leads to cumulative learning and increased benefits.

### Tricks and Techniques

Various teaching traditions describe meditation very differently, from some that dissuade “thinking” altogether to those that teach complex visualizations as a path for the noisy mind to follow during a session. Clark Heinrich, best known for his writings and lectures about the importance of the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom in the antiquity of religion, uses the term “trick” to describe some of the simpler combinations of physical movement and breathing that can quickly alter one’s thoughts and feelings.

Thinking of meditative techniques as “tricks” can demystify practices that often seem esoteric and tedious. The meditative process need not be overly complicated and is, in essence, simply playing with everyday functions. Tricks include seemingly simple techniques such as slow muscle stretches, humming, focus on breath, repeating of a word or phrase, or just sitting still “watching thoughts float by” without getting swept away with them. The trick is whatever works.

### Breathing, Relaxing, and Focusing

Many of these tricks have the effect of increasing a sense of calm and focusing the mind. Repeated slow deep breathing can reliably increase relaxation, but additional techniques are often necessary to keep one occupied so that the meditation actually occurs.

Practiced meditators often say that their ability to meditate translates into an improved ability to focus in general. The methods for maintaining attention on meditation are very similar to those needed to stay focused for long stretches on other tasks. Gurustu, an Erowid crew member, succinctly describes his solution to attention distractions: “Whenever you realize that you aren’t doing what you’re supposed to be doing, start doing it.”

In contrast to some strict traditions that

“Although there are many methods, the basics of meditation might be summed up in the words ‘pay attention and don’t think.’ It is hard to believe that such a practice could be of any benefit at all, let alone be capable of the kinds of transformations and insights claimed by some meditators, yet this is essentially the task undertaken. It is surprisingly difficult, as you will know if you have tried, and the many varieties of meditation can be seen as different ways of easing the task. If you have never tried it, just take 10 seconds and see whether you can \*not think\* for that short length of time.”

— Susan Blackmore, from *Consciousness: An Introduction* (2004)

# INTENTIONAL BREATHING FOR THE SOCIAL GOOD

by Stuart Sovatsky

In 1970, I found myself locked up in the Princeton Township Jail for knowing that my name was not my real self and thus having no answer for an inquiring police officer when my dog boisterously attracted the officer's attention. I was involved in one of those 14-hour mystical research projects that combined my two interests in perfect balance: biochemistry and religion. I was merely manifesting the ancient Buddhist truth of no constant self (anatta). The officer was not amused.

In the next cell was an African American who found empathic amusement in my incarcerated status. Why was I, a posh student, in jail? And what was I studying in that "other" world behind the ivy walls, he wanted to know.

I was, at the time, studying Ethics. He was impressed, since his life was a hornet's nest of ethical problems regarding good and evil and forgiveness and redemption. After I had peaked, my roommates came by and I was released. At my hearing, when my case was dismissed, I told the judge this was no way to treat someone exploring the delicate realms of infinite consciousness. I told him that some sort of counseling service would have really helped. He answered that I, an accused miscreant, was in no position to tell him how to reform the justice system. He was right, I had scant any position at all, in fact.

Thus, unable to forget this unpleasant experience after graduating college, I

embarked on a career of corrections reform, first as a Juvenile Probation Officer in 1973–75 in Atlantic City, where I gave the very counseling to teenagers that I had hoped for during my own time of need. I also taught simple meditation and yoga to my probationers. In 1976, I became an Assistant Director of County Youth Services and wrote what turned out to be the first and only grant application to receive federal money to teach meditation to incarcerated youth. It was called "Project Together", an allusion to the term Yoga which means "to join together".

But it almost didn't happen. A grant evaluator, who had never heard the word "meditation" before, drove from Trenton NJ to Atlantic City to reject my application in person because he thought I was promoting medicating juveniles. I corrected him on his misunderstanding and offered to teach him a simple breathing meditation before his long drive back to Trenton. When he opened his eyes after 5–6 minutes he said, "I'll get you the money." And he did.

For the next year, I taught police captains, the Mayor of Atlantic City (Jay Bradway, Jr.), school teachers, and numerous "at risk" kids how to inhale slowly, exhale slowly, and go within to regain balance after, say, being told by one's Father, "You think you're better than me 'cause you are trying to fix your pathetic life? You're no better than me, you little shit." Hearing this sort of story, I knew that teaching the parents how to

meditate would also be extremely useful to my probationers.

All this eventually led to contact with the Ram Dass Prison Project. I was "chief candidate" to clinically direct the first-ever Prison Ashram in 1977 but, alas, the project folded before it began. The idea was kept alive—mainly by a true hero, Bo Lozoff, of the Human Kindness Foundation—and has since led to the ever-growing Prison Yoga/Meditation movement, now active worldwide and made famous by the documentary film, *Doing Vipassana* [meditation], *Doing Time*.

In 2001 I was given \$15,000 by the Infinity Foundation to do any good works I might choose. I created the First International Conference on Prison Yoga and Meditation. About thirty people came, including some from India. We inspired each other with stories and shared our work. One attendee, Jacque Verduin, tells me that the conference had a significant impact on getting meditation courses into San Quentin Prison. You never know how things will unfold, do you?

In 2007, I will convene a conference on "the world as one family" (Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, Sanskrit) in Delhi, India. I invite people interested in "engaged spirituality" to join us: it will be amazing. ●

*Stuart Sovatsky is an author, researcher, and yoga practitioner. His most recent book is Your Perfect Lips: A Spiritual-Erotic Memoir. You can find more information about Stuart at [Erowid.org/extracts/n10/sovatsky.shtml](http://Erowid.org/extracts/n10/sovatsky.shtml)*

require specific postures, meditation can be performed in any position, including walking or lying down. There are potential benefits even if one only tries meditating for a minute at a time. In fact, meditative techniques can usefully be practiced as one drifts off to sleep.

## Intellectual Insights

Although many of the simple benefits from meditation and intentional breathing practices are related to calming and focusing the mind, basic intellectual insights can quickly result as well.

One important insight is that the mind is surprisingly noisy, crowded, and difficult to stop from chattering. This is not only eye opening, but frustrating. Despite often feeling like we are firmly in control of our thoughts and feelings, meditation can

instill an understanding of the difficulty of maintaining editorial control over what we think and feel. Initially annoying, most periods of meditation have brief flashes of "success" when unwanted distractions fall away. As practice continues, one imagines being able to access the successful moments more and more easily. One learns that some measure of intentional control is possible.

Further, meditation can increase awareness of the mind's processing, improving the ability to observe and report on one's current mental state

## Societal Benefits

Many triggers affect how people think and feel, such as being stuck in bad traffic, arguing with a spouse, or enjoying an ice cream cone. Having an increased awareness

of various states of consciousness, and the causes of such mind states, can create a window of opportunity for altering one's response to these triggers. In a moment of anger, one may reflect on the advice to "take a deep breath and count to ten" before reacting. Reducing knee-jerk reactions to stressful situations—especially in moments of crisis—can benefit the wider community.

Meditation techniques, although often dismissed as "too New Agey" by the mainstream, have made small inroads into unexpected places like prisons (see "Intentional Breathing for the Social Good", above). Meditation practices can help prisoners manage emotional volatility, which can ameliorate the violent social environment, reduce prison costs, and improve both the internal and external experience of prisoners and guards.

### Mixing Meditation and Psychoactives

Simple meditation practices are also useful as tools for evaluating the effects of a psychoactive and for helping direct and improve an experience. The skills and techniques learned are described by many entheogen and psychedelic users as the key tools at their disposal for averting crisis or avoiding anxiety-driven downward spirals during high-dose psychedelic experiences.

Inversely, numerous authors have also described the use of psychoactive substances to help explore their meditative practices. Perhaps most common are the use of caffeinated teas or subtler relaxing herbs, practices condoned and encouraged in some meditative traditions.<sup>1</sup> More unusually, Erowid has received a number of experience reports detailing the use of low- to medium-dose psychedelics as a method for helping practitioners relax into extended periods of meditations.

### Psychedelic Use Leads to Meditation

One unexpected, but fairly well known, side effect of psychedelic use is an increase in desire to learn meditation.<sup>2</sup> Psychedelics can bring out interest in managing one's mental state—either as a reaction to an

out-of-control tripping mind one wants to quiet, or as a response to a peaceful focused tripping mindset that one wants to reproduce.

### Educational Uses

Unlike the ingestion of psychoactive plants and chemicals, simple breathing and focusing techniques can be taught experientially in most educational contexts: meditation is safe, simple, short acting, and legal. Meditative mind states offer a shared point of reference against which foods, plants, drugs, and technologies can be compared and contrasted. The effects of a brief breathing exercise provide an opening for discussing psychoactive effects in general, including strength, duration, and the natural variations between individuals.

When trying to teach about the incredibly complex subject of psychoactive drugs, meditation and other mental practices provide a less controversial entry point to discussing the intentional alteration of mental states. ●

### References

1. Daruma/Bodhidharma is strongly associated with green tea and extended wakefulness.



Healing Buddha (mixed media, 2000)  
by Nemo Boko

Green tea is used by some Buddhist and Zen Buddhist traditions to promote alertness during meditation.

2. Hunt Badiner A, Grey A (Eds). *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics*. Chronicle Books. 2002.

## MEDITATION: A BUILT-IN ABILITY

An edited excerpt from Chapter 7 of Clark Heinrich's forthcoming book, *Finding God Without Religion: A Book of Tools*

*“What’s one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?”*

— The White Queen,  
*Through the Looking Glass*

If I had been in Alice's shoes when the White Queen posed the question above, my answer would not have been “ten”, it would have been “meditation”.

This was not the answer the queen was seeking, of course, but if she had kept her question going long enough, with the kind of single-mindedness for which she was famous, she would have entered into a state of meditation unawares, tricked by her own concentration.

### Just Add Practice

Meditation, like concentration, is a built-in function of the human mind. And

like so many other of our built-in abilities, it has to be learned and practiced if we want to discover its less obvious gifts. When first learning how to meditate, it is very common to feel absolutely overrun with thoughts, in spite of knowing that meditation is about calming the mind and reducing unwanted thoughts. It's almost as if the mind rebels at this at first—it doesn't want to lose its primacy in our lives, so it churns up an inordinate number of thoughts the moment we sit to meditate. When this happens the best antidote is to take a few slow, deep breaths and then proceed. Things will improve.

When we calm the mind, the breath automatically calms down, and when we calm the breath the mind follows. Most meditation techniques are designed around these two principles: there are thought-calming methods and breath-calming methods, and some that work on

both at once. The most important result in any of them, however, is the reduction of thoughts to the barest minimum, until finally the thoughts are held in abeyance. Then, for a period of time, we are not thinking at all. When this occurs the greatest wonders also occur, depending on the length of time we remain in the state.

### Results Matter

It is the results that matter, not whether we have tricked ourselves to get them. Don't be taken in by those who insist that in spiritual practice one shouldn't seek results: that's false humility. If I don't want results why should I bother with any of this? I'm not *greedy* for results, but I want results. I don't have to merely wait and hope for spiritual experience to dawn spontaneously, I can help create one. It only takes practice. ●

# NATURE SQUARED

An Experience Combining *Psilocybe cubensis* with a Yoga Practice

by Mclver

Lately, I have experimented with low-dose mushroom consumption before my very intense (Hatha-based) power yoga class and I have found the benefits to be phenomenal. I should note that my class is both crowded and heated—not to Bikram levels, but still hot. I have experimented between once and twice a month for about six months for a total of ten experiments.

I would describe my pre-shroom yoga ability at somewhere between beginner and intermediate, but during a good yoga/shroom class I find that even expert-level poses are within my reach. The shrooms work to improve my practice in the following ways:

- I feel more centered, so my balance improves.
- My muscles relax, so my flexibility increases. I have very tight hips and normally I struggle with poses like “pigeon.” But on an optimal shroom dose I am able to get deep into the stretch.
- My breathing slows and deepens. Without any conscious effort, I am able to do the deep yogic breathing instructors always encourage—even during the most strenuous parts of class.
- Lastly, I am able to reach deeper levels of meditation during the “restorative” portion of the class. Sometimes I have closed-eyed visuals of trippy, Alex Grey-like images of energy flowing through my body. Sometimes I have no visuals at all, but I always feel that the “healing” aspect of my yoga practice has increased exponentially.

I don’t know whether these benefits are due to the fact that I’m able to practice yoga at a much “higher” level (no pun intended) or whether the benefits result from a direct effect of the shrooms on my psyche. Most likely they are a delicious combination of both factors.

What I find interesting is that most of the benefits are quantifiable. A question skeptics often ask entheogen users is, “How does tripping benefit your regular life?” This is always difficult to answer, because the benefits of entheogens are as complex and subjective as the human mind itself. I may think tripping gives immediate and lasting benefits to my music/writing/art/love life, etc., but how do I prove that? Now I have finally stumbled upon an easily quantifiable benefit: I know objectively that my yoga practice improves while I am under the influence of shrooms. Should I ever be able to volunteer for a study of this phenomenon, a scientist would be able to measure improvements in my flexibility, as well as my more relaxed breathing, heart rate, etc. Even without a doctor measuring physiology, anyone with a regular practice knows when they are able to stretch farther into a pose.

Now a word about dosage—I started my experiments with about 1.5 grams of dried shrooms (*Psilocybe cubensis*) and slowly worked my way up to my ideal: 2.2 grams. I consume the shrooms in a tea approximately 45 minutes before class begins (to avoid digestive discomfort). I take an amount that is just shy of what would give me light open-eyed visuals of the “Persian carpet” variety. Once the open-eyed visuals start, I find the coordination and balance aspects of my practice too difficult. Conversely, I find there is very little wiggle room between an “optimal” dosage and too low of a dose that barely benefits my practice at all. I have been patient in experimenting, and the benefits from an optimal dosage have astounded me. A good “yoga/shroom” day can make a struggling beginner yogi like me feel like I have just received a class from the Buddha himself.

I fervently hope a researcher will one day conduct a study into this type of benefit. In the meantime, more anecdotal trip reports may help establish a foundation for future research. ●

[Erowid.org/exp/exp.php?ID=39657](http://Erowid.org/exp/exp.php?ID=39657)



MOON TREE, BY CAH.

**“TO THE HIGHEST GOOD,  
AND THE GOODEST HIGH.”**

**CARLA ANNETTE HIGDON  
AUGUST 24, 1963 – JANUARY 30, 2006**

# The Value of EXPERIENCE

EROWID'S COLLECTION OF FIRST-PERSON PSYCHOACTIVE REPORTS

BY EARTH & FIRE EROWID

Over the past six years, the Experience Vaults have become a major cornerstone of the Erowid library. When we began Erowid, we never imagined how valuable these experience reports would become. Thanks to a robust triage and review system for submissions, both the quality and popularity of the Experience Vaults continues to rise.

Since we first wrote an introduction of the system in October 2002,<sup>1</sup> we have received a number of questions and criticisms about the Experience Vaults. We hope this article will help provide some answers to the criticisms as well as insight into why we consider experience reports to be so important to our ongoing work.

## Design Goals

The purpose of the Erowid Experience Vaults is to collect, review, and categorize a large compilation of first-person reports about the use of psychoactive plants, chemicals, and technologies. In 2000, when we initially launched the software used to manage these reports, we had in mind moving from several hundred reports to a goal of 100,000. We saw several benefits to publishing this many reports:

- Reduce the likelihood of presenting an unbalanced picture due to having only a few unrepresentative reports;
- Create a common format that can be used to describe hundreds or thousands of different substances;
- Help document and communicate why people use psychoactive substances;
- Allow users to describe, in their own words, the experiences they have and the impact these substances have on their lives;
- Permit visitors who have little or no knowledge of a substance to learn about it from those who use it.

## The Review Process

Erowid currently receives more than 25 experience reports every day; only a portion of these contain useful descriptions. Because of this, each submitted report is read and reviewed by knowledgeable peers—people well-read about a wide variety of psychoactives, their dosages, and their effects. The goal of this process is to check each report, before publishing, for interest, quality, accuracy, and general believability.

When a report is submitted, it enters a “trialoging” system where it is read, graded from A to F, and commented on by at least two trained triagers. There are currently 36 volunteer triagers working on this process. Once a report has been triaged by two individuals, it is then edited by a reviewer who categorizes and gives a final rating

to each report before publishing. It is the triager's job to wade through incoming submissions looking for the gems, so that the painstaking task of editing is not wasted on poor reports. Reviewers are selected from the most experienced triagers who have shown dedication and attention to detail during the triaging process. There are currently five active reviewers.

The triaging process was added to the review system in 2004 and provides several benefits. First, it allows new crew members to more easily get involved by creating an entry-level position that requires less training. It also creates a self-selecting process by which motivated volunteers can become reviewers. The triage system improves the overall quality of published reports by allowing reviewers to focus their attention on fewer, higher-quality reports. This shortens the time between the submission and publication of better reports. Finally, the triage system provides a feedback loop that allows administrators to keep an eye on whether the ratings of individual crew members are inconsistent with others, possibly indicating a need for more training.

The review process allows us to verify that submitted texts are believable first-person experiences, remove intentional or inadvertent product endorsements, and ensure that no one's privacy is compromised. All of this helps improve the quality of the collection.

## Speak for Yourself

With few exceptions, the Erowid Experience Vaults consist of first-person descriptions of the use of psychoactives. Our editorial policy is to reject most third-person descriptions of other people's experiences, impersonal descriptions of



Old Smokey,  
by Richard Marchand (mixed/digital, 2005)



Shamens,  
by Gnomosapien (digital, 2002)

psychoactives and their use, instructional articles, or other writings that are not first-hand accounts.

Statements people make about their own experiences have an inherent validity. After all, answering the subjective question, “What is your experience like?” requires a first-person point of view.

Because people want to contribute to the growing field of knowledge about psychoactives, many are tempted to write “authoritative” articles that require a great deal of research and fact checking in order to be validated. However, most people do not have the required knowledge or resources to add to the literature at that level.

Experience reports provide an outlet for people to share their knowledge in a context where readers are primed to understand the article for what it is: a personal, first-person account. One may disagree with their statements or have conflicting experiences, but, at a fundamental level, a first-person description of an experience cannot be argued with.

#### Peer Reviewed Self-Case Reports

Experience reports offer a direct way to document the use and effects of psychoactives. Individual reports can be compared to medical “case reports” that are commonly published in peer-reviewed

journals. The Experience Vaults are a hybrid between a survey and a peer-reviewed collection of articles.

Often dismissed as “anecdotal”, self-reports highlight the fundamentally subjective nature of having one’s thoughts and feelings influenced by taking a substance. As with medical case reports, a single experience report can not be assumed to be representative of the wider population; it is an individual data point about what happened to one person, who used a particular psychoactive, on a particular day, at a particular dose. In isolation, any single report is just one person’s opinion, but *en masse* those opinions can be discussed objectively, in the same way that surveys can transform personal opinions into quantifiable data.

In some ways, first-person experience reports are weaker than medical case reports, which are generally written by an attending physician. Most of Erowid’s experience reports are anonymous, for legal and privacy reasons, so there is no way to contact the author for follow-up questions. It is rare for experience reports to include toxicology information validating the identity of the substance(s) taken.

But experience reports are more valuable than medical case reports in important ways. Case reports are usually restricted to events that resulted in a medical emergency; this leaves a huge void in the collected data. Experience reports are not

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“Opening each report is like unwrapping a little anonymous gift with all the little thrills and surprises. Many are so difficult to rate that I hardly know what to do with them.”

— William (triager)

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limited in this way. Experience reports provide greater insight into the thoughts of users, the way they make choices, and the meaning of their experiences. They provide the intimacy of the personal subjective narrative as well as the value of an objective collection. As the number of collected reports increases, one can make better generalizations about the range of doses used, how dose relates to subjective effects, the range of effects, and what doses

## I’M GLAD THEY WRITE...

Feedback from an M.D.

“I appreciate the Erowid site and the way it is run. I take no mind-altering substances. I am a doctor—specifically an emergency room physician in rural Illinois. I have to take care of people who take all kinds of substances: created chemicals, prescription and non-prescription medications, herbs and anything that will alter their experience of the universe. Unfortunately, of course, lots of them don’t think, and don’t read, and mix things that shouldn’t be mixed. Most of the time they come in because they are too stoned to respond or are having a panic attack (or equivalent). Most of them can’t even remember (or won’t admit) what they took. But when they can, it’s nice to be able to type it in to the search on Erowid and see if anyone else has had the same experience.

Just today, someone took 200 mg Zoloft thinking it was Tylenol (after all, it was in the Tylenol bottle). Nothing else showed up in his urine. Poison control was worthless—they told me the amount he took didn’t even qualify as an ingestion since it could have been prescribed in that dosage. Then they faxed me 13 pages of information that was worthless because it was too verbose to read. But all of the symptoms he had were described on your site. Succinctly.

Having found your incredibly useful site, I have recommended it to other physicians and law-enforcement. They are all grateful. This sounds sarcastic, but I’m serious.

Anyway, I’m sorry anybody takes mind-altering substances, because I consider it a preventable cause of a trip to the emergency room. But if they do, I’m glad they write about it.”

Sign me,  
Clean enough to sell pee

or substance combinations are most likely to lead to health problems.

### Long-term Open Format Survey

It is important to remind people that the Experience Vaults cannot, by themselves, be assumed to be representative of the general population. Not only are Erowid visitors likely to differ from the general population, but people willing to describe their (sometimes illegal) psychoactive use may not be characteristic of even the psychoactive-using public. Furthermore, our peer review process inevitably introduces biases that will affect the collection in currently unquantified ways.

Yet, despite the problems with making valid statistical extrapolations from the Experience Vaults, they can be compared to a long-term, ongoing, open-format survey. The individual submissions form a collection that can be analyzed to provide an outline of substances, dosages, contexts, and routes of administration, as well as the resulting range of effects. Sophisticated textual processing of the reports (see “Surfing the Matrix”, p. 18) may be able to quantify additional complex relationships between these factors.

### Why Not Multiple-Choice Surveys?

The experience of using psychoactives is quintessentially subjective. This type of subjective data is extremely difficult to collect with a standardized set of multiple-choice questions.



**Transubstantiation of Leaves,**  
by James Vining (medium format, 2005)

Simple surveys collect aggregate data that tends to focus on majority and common effects. Numerically-oriented surveys and research “instruments” (formalized survey-like forms filled out by research subjects), often lose or even intentionally remove unusual or unique reactions as “outliers”. Most surveys result in distilled summaries that discount and flatten the value of unique experiences.

Small populations and niche groups often have their views better communicated through narrative experience reports. These reports spotlight individuals and emphasize the primacy of each person’s experience, regardless of how uncommon that experience may be. A single eloquent description of an unusual reaction or experience can go a long way towards making that experience more “real” in the minds of those studying the subject.

In the late 1990s, we helped work on a research protocol involving the administration of a psychedelic to healthy adults. We read and discussed with researchers the existing “empirical instruments” that had been used to try to formally quantify psychedelic experiences. These include Strassman’s Hallucinogen Rating Scale, the Piedmont Transcendence Scale, Hood’s Mysticism Scale, and the Psychedelic Experience Questionnaire, among others. In 1998 and 1999, we also experimented with multiple-choice and short-answer surveys created and distributed at Burning Man.

It became clear that attempting to record and measure people’s experiences with psychoactives is a very rough science; all of the available measurement instruments are flawed or limited, especially when trying to explore and study areas that

have not already been well documented. Checkboxes, scales, and short-answer questions constrain responses, resulting in critical elements of an experience being missed.

While there are certainly great opportunities to collect interesting data through multiple-choice and numerically-oriented instruments, these do little to communicate the experiences themselves.

### Useful to the Audience

There is nothing quite like reading a large number of experience reports to get a sense of a given substance or the ways that people put it to use. The main reason many people write about their experiences is to share their hard-won knowledge with others. A huge portion of psychoactive users who visit Erowid want to be careful about their use, and reading reports can point out the difference between sloppy users and meticulous ones, or between careful and careless practices. Readers

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“A catalog of activities isn’t really a report. Yes, provide set and setting, but also tell the story explaining how the substance affected you mentally, emotionally, physically, visually, psychically, spiritually, sexually, etc.”

— Crayon (triager)

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can quickly ascertain the potential dangers associated with a substance based on the bad choices that others have made and documented. Many people can learn from the mistakes of one individual. Reading these reports is also a stark reminder that it is impossible to capture the full spectrum of experiences in a single document or a single voice.

Over the last five years, we have been encouraged by an increase in the number of physicians, nurses, and teachers who tell us how Erowid’s Experience Vaults have been useful in their work. Even experts who have read the available mainstream literature about a drug’s effects can gain new and important insights through the reports.

A recent article published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*,<sup>2</sup> by EJ Cone

On any given day around 12,000 unique Erowid visitors read at least one report and more than 72,000 reports are viewed in all (approximately 14% of the site’s overall traffic).

The initial goal was to eventually collect 100,000 unique reports. As of May 2006, there have been 53,135 experience reports submitted. Of those, approximately 10,000 have been published, 13,000 have been rejected, 11,000 have been fully triaged, another 3,000 have been partially triaged, and the rest are still waiting to be read.



# An Insanely Large Suppository of Knowledge

Compiled by Erowid Crew

Reading experience reports can be an exercise in patience, but it can also be inadvertently entertaining. In November 2004, reviewers and triagers began keeping a list of sentences or phrases from experience reports that struck them as particularly funny. We are printing selections from this list in the spirit of goofy humor, thinking that Erowid members might find them amusing as well. They appear as they were submitted (unedited). We have no desire to ridicule or belittle the authors excerpted below.

"This entire report was probably made up."  
(Many assorted)

"This night was madness, insanity, craziness. Some of the memories are lost. I wouldn't regret it at all if it wasn't for the property damage." (5-HTP & LSD)

"I didn't have a clue about drugs, somehow the cops from the DARE program had given me the idea pot was something deadly you huffed out of paper bags, I didn't even know it came from a plant." (Cannabis)

"After reaching the fatality point my experience became horrible." (Caffeine)

"I was one of those guys that always wanted to try everything and was jealous when someone had taken something I hadn't. So I proceeded with doing as many drugs as Erowid has." (LSD & PCP)

"shamanism is just a cool word for total schizophrenia" (*Salvia divinorum*)

"My mother told me that she had to leave the room a couple of times b/c she could not help but laugh at the things I was doing or saying - which she figured to also be a side effect of her stress of me almost dying. Her favourite was when I stood on the bed, stripped naked and swooshed my hands over my body, yelling 'and ALL of this for only \$3.99!!' (Dimenhydrinate)

"Salvia D. is not a drug -- it is a TRANSPORT mechanism that wouldn't be out of line to think of as the machine depicted in Contact." (*Salvia divinorum* 5x extract)

"And there you have it. My accounting of the last 2 days. I have learned my lesson and won't take that ever again. I hope." (Nutmeg)

"Today the Kitchen, Tomorrow the Cataloging of My Socks!" (Methamphetamine)

"You could have the same kind of fun from a bad head injury." (Diphenhydramine)

"I feel I could change the world drastically and invoke some sort of mass epiphany, if only I could rise from this chair and stop twitching my legs and grinding my teeth." (Amphetamine [Adderall])

"I have a heartbeat monitor attached to my finger, and IV in my arm, and pads with wires coming out of them all over my chest and legs. Except for all the medical equipment, a bucket in front of me filled with charcoal and blood, and some breathing walls and towels, it was as if nothing had happened at all." (Psilocybin Mushrooms)

Title: "Knolege is power" (Assorted)

"I'm pretty much straight edge now, except occasionally I drop acid or do shrooms, or take ecstasy or something of that sort." (Cannabis)

"Before the trip, the world around me seemed stable and predictable. If there was a red apple in front of me, it would remain a red apple, and it would not turn into plaid ostrich and start speaking Hebrew!" (PCP)

"I was thinking in assembly code rather than C++" (Mushrooms)

"I've been lost in my room for over 5 hours now" [this was the entire report] (Morning Glory Seeds)

attempts to describe the various routes of administration that people use with psychoactive pharmaceuticals. His research was made much easier, in part, by the detailed categorization of Erowid experience reports by route of administration and substance. Unfortunately, while Cone cited sixteen individual Erowid reports that he used in his analysis, he did not acknowledge the painstaking work Erowid has done to make this type of research easier.

## Useful to the Author

Beyond being valuable to others, writing an experience report can help the author more fully integrate and learn from their own experiences. By recording their thoughts, an author can solidify an experience in

their memory and work through life issues that arise. Writing about one's experiences promotes a meta-awareness of the choices one makes about psychoactive use. Over time, this should increase the care with which people use psychoactive plants and chemicals.

## Cross-cultural Communication

Well-written experience descriptions can compellingly communicate to those outside drug-using subcultures. They can put a personal face on psychoactive use that is more detailed and nuanced than the caricature of the drug user portrayed by the mainstream media. A multiplicity of voices describing personal experiences can help provide insight for those who want to understand the

broad diversity of people who choose to use psychoactives.

## Poor Quality Reports

The primary complaint we receive about the Experience Vaults is that we publish too many poorly written or dull reports. Although quality of writing is one factor used in grading reports, we feel strongly that reports written by less educated or less skilled writers should not be excluded: accepting only erudite, articulate reports would introduce its own bias. This goes hand-in-hand with a decision not to completely correct and standardize grammar and spelling in reports. Writing skill and style are important elements that help convey a sense of the author. The style, tone, and

*There is the phenomenon of non-ordinary [language], or what I call “visible language” [...] where technology, virtual reality, cybernetics, and human-machine interfacing can actually make an impact and explore a frontier.*

– Terence McKenna, from “Ordinary Language, Visible Language and Virtual Reality”

## SURFING THE MATRIX

by Jeremy Coyle and Matthew Baggott

Erowid’s Experience Report Vaults offer a unique resource for understanding the effects of psychoactive drugs, many of which are poorly described in the scientific literature. Erowid’s Vaults contain thousands of reports describing people’s experiences. These are a potential gold mine of wisdom and insight. Of course, mining this gold currently takes serious effort. One must read through dozens or more reports to get a sense of the community’s experience with a substance, and if one selects a non-representative subset of reports to read, any conclusions one draws may be incorrect. We hope to implement an objective technique for summarizing and visualizing the meaning of these reports.

We will use Latent Semantic Analysis (LS Analysis), a statistical technique that analyzes patterns of word usage in order to interpret text.<sup>1</sup> LS Analysis is a well-established technique similar to what is used by search engines to figure out which documents best match search terms. LS Analysis takes a collection of text documents and analyzes the frequency with which individual words occur in each document and across the entire collection: the word “insight” might occur three times in one report, zero times in another, and hundreds of times across the collection. From these word counts, a mathematical matrix is created within which relationships between words, reports, and words and reports can be characterized. Because we know what drug is being described in each report, we are able to look for relationships between individual words or combinations of words, and specific drugs.

From a mathematical point of view, this matrix can be considered a multi-dimensional space. Each unique word in the collection acts as a dimension to define the space and a report’s position along each word-dimension is determined by the number of times the word occurs in the report. This allows us to “map” the location of each report or drug within the space. Because spaces with

more than three dimensions are inherently difficult to visualize, we will use statistical tools to find maps with fewer dimensions that preserve the relative locations of reports.

We think LS Analysis can help characterize the effects of various substances: which are more visual; which are entactogenic; which are more likely to lead to a bad trip. With this method, drug experiences could even be compared to dreams or “spontaneous” religious experiences. All this should not only be interesting to Erowid visitors, but may also suggest hypotheses for further scientific research.

We are currently testing the efficacy of LS Analysis on a limited subset of the Experience Vaults. Our initial focus is on the more commonly used and better-understood drugs like MDMA and LSD as well as some lesser-known psychedelics for which there are 100 or more reports. We have written code to count words and form matrices and are now beginning to explore the resulting spaces, learning which subspaces are most interesting.

Since Moreau de Tours’s work in the mid-nineteenth century states might have certain common elements or dimensions, regardless of how the states are induced. For example, Dittrich reported<sup>3</sup> evidence that many altered states include changes in sense of self, feelings of altered reality, and sensory changes. It will be fascinating if we can find evidence of these common underlying dimensions to altered states in the Erowid experience reports.

Latent Semantic Analysis provides an objective way to quantify the meanings of experiences, yet making these meanings clear will be challenging. Work in the field of information visualization suggests a solution: take advantage of the human visual system and its ability to rapidly understand landscapes or other scenes. For example, results of our analyses could be displayed as three-dimensional maps. Each drug could be represented as an island with position, topography, or other properties indicating

how much the drug is associated with certain changes in mental state. Longitude might indicate how much the drug changes “ego boundaries”, from egotistic west to ego-less east. Latitude might display “sensory changes”, from the spare north to the rich sensory confusion of the tropical south. On each island, altitude of mountains could suggest how readily the drug leads to euphoric bliss; towns could indicate prosocial effects. Once learned, such a map could facilitate rapid comprehension of how drugs are similar and different.

Our project brings to mind Terence McKenna’s concept of visible language. He described DMT and other tryptamine psychedelics as sometimes allowing people to experience language as visible “high-speed sculpture”. One day the results of our analyses could be represented in an interactive virtual reality. As we work on our comparatively drab analysis, we occasionally imagine future Erowid visitors jacking in and navigating the visible language matrix of this community’s wisdom. ●

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*This project is a collaboration between Matthew Baggott (a neuroscience graduate student at UC Berkeley), David Presti (a lecturer in Molecular and Cellular Biology at UC Berkeley), Juan Carlos Lopez (a researcher at the Addiction Pharmacology Research Lab in San Francisco), and Jeremy Coyle (a cognitive science undergraduate student at UC Berkeley).*

word choices made by an author can help peer reviewers assess the validity of what the author describes.

We understand that some visitors would prefer not to read poorly written reports, and over time, we hope to improve filtering and sorting interfaces so that individuals can avoid reading reports that fall below their specified quality thresholds.

### Do Reports Dilute the Science?

Some visitors express concern that experience reports dilute the value of other documents Erowid publishes because many reports seem trivial and uninteresting. These people complain that our What's New page is too dominated by the constant flow of reports being published. While a single report of LSD taken at a mall certainly is not as valuable, on a per-document basis, as a well-edited overview of the pharmacology of hallucinogens, it is significantly more accessible for the average person.

We continue to work to improve features such as the What's New page, search engine, and indexes to make it easier for visitors to avoid wading through documents that don't interest them. But, we do not feel, as some have suggested, that it is inappropriate to display experience reports side-by-side with scientific articles.

### "Don't You Have Enough?"

Some visitors have asked "Don't you have enough?" But in our view, the answer is clearly "No". Even with a large collection of reports, there are many substances,

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"I like to think portions of my past experiences have prepared me for being able to critique reports about drug use. I consider triaging a community service for the scientific and drug culture communities."

— Biglo (triager)

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sub-sets of users, or types of use that are inadequately represented.

Of 10,299 published reports, only 61 describe absinthe use, less than 100 describe ayahuasca experiences, and only around 150 involve nitrous oxide. For truly obscure

psychoactives, the numbers are tiny: only fourteen 2C-T-21 reports, two reports of TMA-6 use, and no reports about pure psilocybin. Although we have over 800 reports involving psilocybin-containing mushrooms, there is very little depth in certain areas: only 12 involve family themes and only one includes the combination of fluoxetine (Prozac) and mushrooms. If the goal is collecting enough reports for each



Les Sylphides, the Dying Swan,  
by Adam Bridgewater (oil, 2005)

substance to allow for the meaningful study of sub-categories such as gender, dose, setting, and drug combinations, even 1,000 per substance begins to seem like a small number.

We occasionally have members and visitors tell us that too much of Erowid's resources are focused on Experience Reports. Because of the review system we have developed, the triaging and reviewing of reports is done largely by volunteers. Although the process does require some management, we view it as an extremely effective use of the crew's time.

### Art as Experience

No description of experience reports would be complete without mentioning the value of visionary art created to express or depict these experiences. For those more visually inclined, art is a more accessible representation of experience. Art can give a strong sense of emotion and mental state at a single glance. We continue to

be excited about the Visionary Art Vaults, both for their pure aesthetic value as well as for their ability to represent psychoactive experiences very differently from the text-based Experience Vaults.

### Historical Record

We often think about how valuable it would be if we had large numbers of experience reports from times past. Imagine if there were 100,000 experience reports from the 1960s. And how fantastic it would be to have those same people write follow-up reports forty years later.

The Experience Vaults are contributing to this historical record. We hope that in the future, Erowid's collection will act as a powerful tool to communicate how psychoactives have affected hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout their lives. In the meantime, it serves as a unique way for people to share their experiences and add to the historical record.

### Future Directions

We have many ideas for the Experience Vaults, from streamlining submission and review systems, to improving search and display features, to facilitating related research.

In particular, the list includes adding a structured experience report form to collect a larger standardized set of data about each author and experience, a more formalized system for reporting drug interactions, and a visitor/member rating and comment system to allow readers to provide quality commentary about published experiences.

### The Present

In most cases, it is no longer necessary for people who intend to try a psychoactive material to do so without knowing what their peers and elders have to say about the experience; from errors to triumphs, warnings to suggestions, the people who take psychoactive substances have a lot to share with those who come looking for the information. ●

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# COMMUNICATING EXPERIENCE

BY JON HANNA

Documenting one's drug experiences is a time-honored tradition. Visionary voyages have been masterfully depicted in paintings by Ernst Fuchs, Mati Klarwein and Alex Grey, among others. Working in countless styles, musicians harness sound to reminisce upon or induce aspects of altered consciousness. And authors such as Fitz Hugh Ludlow, Aldous Huxley, Henri Michaux, and Anaïs Nin—or more recently, Timothy Leary, Terence McKenna, and the Shulgins—have poetically evoked psychedelic mind spaces via the written word.

Along with books compiled of such material, “experience reports” have been featured in small circulation publications like the *Psychedelic Information Center Bulletin*, *The Psychozoic Press*, *Notes From The Underground*, and *The Entheogen Review*. And beginning in the mid-1990s, the main stage for trip tales shifted to e-mail lists and websites.

As a book and magazine editor, over the years I have had the opportunity to peruse a wide variety of personal stories of drug use, and I have learned a lot about the art of recording and communicating the psychedelic experience.

The value of retaining a diary of one's drug adventures struck me with the most impact when I read Myron Stolaroff's autobiography, *Thanatos to Eros: Thirty-five Years of Psychedelic Exploration*. Through his well-written, engaging reflections, Myron expressed the idea that drug trips themselves aren't of paramount importance. Rather, the crux of the biscuit is how one is able to improve one's life following these experiences. For most of us, such betterment requires a lot of hard work and we welcome anything to make that easier. Over time, documenting one's experiences allows for the opportunity to ruminate on personal psychological or spiritual hurdles, gauging one's progress. Sharing these vignettes acts as a sacred community service, since folks can learn from one's successes and mistakes.

However, the reader of other people's experience reports may quickly become frustrated by a lack of those specific details that could allow for practical application of the material presented. Time and again, when reading reports, I have wondered: “Yes, but how was the drug in question prepared? How much was taken? What did the psychonaut weigh? What sort of previous experience did the person have with this drug? Was he or she on any medications whose interactions impacted the results reported?” That last question is pivotal in a world where people increasingly pop a plethora of prescription meds on a daily basis. Perhaps then, what people need is a standard experience report check-list (see sidebar), which provides reminders of key topics to consider each time one writes up a trip. The creation of such a check-list inspired me to pen this article, and I welcome feedback on ways to improve it.

## Tricks of the Trade

In describing the intensity of a drug-induced experience, the rating tool of choice for many is “The Shulgin Scale” of plus/minus, plus one, plus two, plus three, and plus four. Its simplicity makes it easy to use, which is key for self-reporting (see [Erowid.org/library/books\\_online/pihkal/shulgin\\_rating\\_scale.shtml](http://Erowid.org/library/books_online/pihkal/shulgin_rating_scale.shtml)).

A chronology of the effects generally forms a report's backbone. When was the drug taken? When was a first “alert” felt? When did the full effects manifest? It can be helpful to have paper pre-marked with increments of time, based on how often one hopes to jot down a few notes. Clocks and alarms can remind one of the recording task; kitchen timers work well for increments of sixty minutes or less, and are easy to reset.

One of the greatest challenges I have had when writing my own experience reports has been that, once I am having the voyage, I lose motivation to write anything about it. At such times, documentation tasks may strike me as being silly or missing the point; in a “be here now” vein, my mental

state compels participation rather than observation. I wonder why it mattered so much to me, before I embarked on the trip, that I bother to try and describe it every X-many minutes. While awash in the ineffable, aren't all attempts to distill that mind state into something “effable” just doomed anyway?

One recourse is an audio recorder; it may be easier to vocalize what I'm experiencing than write about it. Another solution is to have a sober friend act as a sitter, who has been instructed to present pre-specified tasks at set times. For example, in *The Secret Chief*, Leo Zeff (aka “Jacob”) describes the technique of selecting old personal photos prior to the trip and having the sitter present them during the experience. A sitter can also be responsible for operating an audio or video recorder to avoid technical issues interrupting the flow of the experience.

Developed by Russell T. Hurlburt, Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES) is a method that generates discrete qualitative reports of inner experiences. Via a beeper sounded at random intervals, DES cues people to collect samples of their inner experience during an agreed-upon time range. Each beep is a reminder to answer the question: “What are the details of your inner experience at this very moment?” (Hurlburt 1990. *Sampling Normal and Schizophrenic Inner Experience*). One can jot down notes or speak into a portable recorder, tagging the response with the current time at the end of the entry. (See [Erowid.org/extracts/n10/exp\\_des.shtml](http://Erowid.org/extracts/n10/exp_des.shtml) for more information about DES.) Such a method would be particularly suited for use with longer-acting psychedelic drugs and might generate interesting results. Using a specific ring tone, a friend (or computer) could call a cell phone at random intervals during a predetermined range of hours. There would be no need to answer the calls—they are just triggers to record the “inner experience”.

A portion of each report should be dedicated to post-experience “reflections”. These can be written the day after the

# EXPERIENCE REPORT ESSENTIALS

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experience, and/or a week later, and/or a month later, and/or a year later, or whenever the mood strikes as long as the date is noted. Revisiting and updating old trip reports can provide new insights and renewed encouragement for inciting or maintaining positive psychological changes. Reflections and follow-ups are also important to allow others to see what the author feels has or has not worked.

Either in the report itself or in a separate profile, authors should write some background information about themselves, including factual details like a history of past drug consumption, but also views on philosophical issues like religion, mysticism, and consciousness.

Are you a rationalist/materialist deeply committed to the scientific method? Do you believe in psychic phenomenon, ghosts, aliens, or plants spirits? Are you a diehard agnostic, or do you adhere to any particular religion? Answering these sort of questions allows readers to have a better idea where an author is coming from.

## Contribute to Erowid

Experience reports that fit specific criteria are welcomed at the Erowid website (see [Erowid.org/experiences/submit](http://Erowid.org/experiences/submit)). With each new submission posted, the Experience Vaults become incrementally more useful for those interested in trying some new compound or combination (or more enjoyable for those who just like to live vicariously through the voyages of others). Any given report is not the final word, of course, and caution is particularly warranted when applying information gleaned from reports in cases where the data pool is limited.

When buying a pizza recently, the counter guy noticed my Mind States bank card and asked me what business I was in. Once we got to talking, he described a somatically less-than-pleasant morning glory seed trip he had taken, remarking that he had not read far enough in the Erowid experience reports before trying the seeds. After heaving all night, the next day he discovered a submission describing some "ten hours of hell" that echoed his own experience. The caveat, then: read as much as possible before heading into unexplored territory.

Whether written, rendered artistically, or recorded in some other medium, there's always room for more well-communicated, unique voyages. ●

Many experience descriptions fail to include some details that could make the report practically useful. The following is a list of topics that experience reports can cover to better document and communicate the event.

## Basic Details

- Name/pseudonym
- Year of birth
- Gender
- Weight
- Year of experience
- Psychoactives used

## Previous Experience

- Experience with material
- Experience with similar psychoactives

## Preparation

- Physical or mental preparations made
- Information: sources consulted
- Intention: intentions of participant(s)
- Mindset: what participant(s) had been thinking, feeling, reading, watching, or doing in the preceding hours or days
- Record keeping: how and when notes are taken (during or after experience), methods used

## Context(s)

- Location, physical environment, time of day, weather
- Audio: music and sound environment
- People present: alone, with friends, in a crowd
- Support staff: whether sitter or others were available who were not using the psychoactive

## Drug Identification

- Degree of certainty that the material was properly identified, how this is known, whether friends had already tried the same material
- Analysis: tests (if any) used to confirm identity of material
- Dose: amount taken, when taken, and certainty of dosage
- Measurement: weighing method, precision
- Preparation: recipe or methods used

## Combinations / Food / Interactions

- Food: when, what type, and how much food was eaten prior to and during experience
- Supplements: Nutritional or herbal supplements taken in days prior to the experience
- Medications: other pharmaceutical or herbal medicines taken in days prior to the experience

## Effects Progression

- Chronology: timing and duration of first alert, first clear effects, peak, first decline, and time when fully "down"
- Transitions: how effects changed over time, coming up, peak effects, come-down, after effects

## Body-Related Effects

- Physiological: heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, perception of temperature, skin sensations, nausea, changes in urination
- Vision: changes to focus, sensitivity to light, nystagmus
- Physical abilities: changes to balance, walking, running, juggling
- Physical energy: lethargy, stimulation, body felt heavy/light
- Other physical effects: jaw tension, shivering, muscle shaking, bloodshot eyes, dry mouth

## Cognition-Related Effects

- General mental processes: difficulty concentrating, associative thinking, dissociation, thoughts qualitatively different from normal thinking patterns
- Emotional state: happy, sad, fearful, subdued
- Connection to others: feel closer, more isolated, about the same
- Communication: ability and desire, whether communication felt easy or difficult
- Visualization: internal mental imagery, ease of visualization
- Attention: changes to attention span, sense of boredom, or interest
- Insight: new revelations or discoveries
- Erotic: sexual or sensual effects

## Retrospection

- Overall impressions: good, bad, in between, whether the experience was worth repeating
- What worked: what were good choices
- What did not work: what mistakes were made
- Effects on others: whether others had similar or different effects
- Lasting value: whether insights or benefits still seem valuable days or weeks later
- Comparisons: how effects of other psychoactives or experiences compare
- Reflections: how the experience seems days, weeks, months, or years later

# LSD Purity

BY EARTH & FIRE EROWID

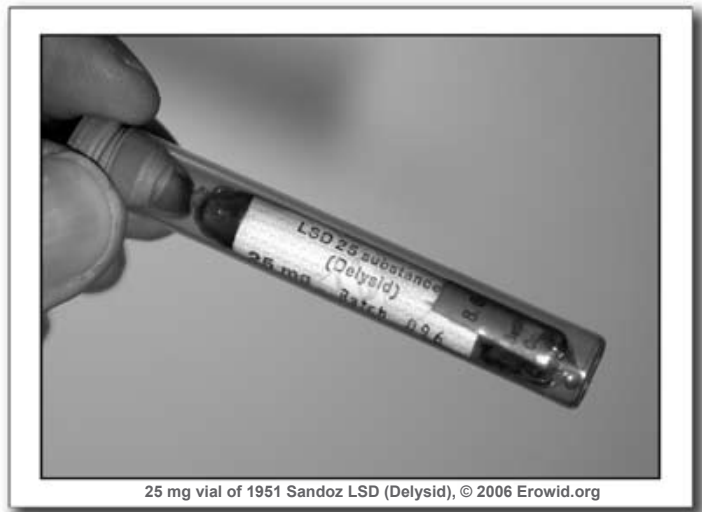
Whether or not there is any “real” *d*-LSD available on the underground market is a debate that recurs cyclically. Most informed people in the field dismiss the occasional flare-up of claims that those who have only had street acid after the 1970s have never had “pure acid”. This claim is often accompanied by related claims that modern street acid is badly made, contaminated, degraded, or something other than LSD altogether. There are further speculations about whether even minute impurities could affect the receptor binding of LSD and therefore change the experience, or how LSD degrades over time, possibly converting active LSD into lumi-LSD, iso-LSD, or other less-well-known degradation products that might alter the effects of the material.

It is our job to take such debates seriously and to try to add data to them wherever possible. Six years ago, we attempted to start an LSD Testing Project, but the complexity of the actual testing procedure coupled with a fear of the Drug Enforcement Administration by the labs licensed and capable of doing such testing meant that we were only able to get a single sample analyzed. Recently, an event occurred that provides some additional data in this slowly evolving debate.

An unopened, brown-glass vial of 1951 Sandoz LSD-25 (Delysid) was contributed to a gathering in celebration of Albert Hofmann’s 100th birthday. The vial had been in the possession of a single person for the last 30+ years, stored casually, mostly in darkness. When opened, the material was a very light brown sugar to salmon color. One chemist described the fluffy, clumpy, sparkly crystalline powder as looking like “crushed needles”. It was weighed and dissolved into four-ounce liquid doses containing between 100 and 110 micrograms each ( $\pm 10\%$ ).

## Storage & Degradation

Although the vial was completely sealed, without cracks, one of the major questions was whether there would be significant loss of potency by degradation as a result of the 55 years that had passed since it was manufactured. After trying it, the predominant opinion among the more than 70 participants and observers was that there was no detectable loss in potency. This was the clearest result from the reported experiment: air-tight brown glass appears to be a very effective long-term storage method for LSD. After 55 years, stored at varying room temperatures, the LSD seemed to be fully potent.



25 mg vial of 1951 Sandoz LSD (Delysid), © 2006 Erowid.org

## Is Sandoz LSD Different?

The other major question on many people’s minds seemed to be how Sandoz LSD would differ from the street acid they’d taken before. This was something a number of them considered, after the initial surprise over the fact that the material seemed not to have lost potency. We asked several participants to further describe their thoughts, by answering the query:

“Briefly describe your experience with LSD (number of times taken, how long ago first taken) and compare your experience of other sources of acid with the Sandoz material you tried. Was the Sandoz LSD different than street acid? Was it about the same? Share some of your thoughts about this.”

Some people appeared hesitant to answer whether they felt that the Sandoz LSD was qualitatively different from other acid they had taken. Several participants were moderately concerned that if they said the LSD seemed similar to other street acid, the observation could potentially sadden other participants or appear ungrateful to the extremely generous provider.

There were raves about the unquestioned magic of the event, and the unique opportunity to try such an elusive and mythically sourced substance. However, the consensus among those to whom we spoke who had substantial experience with street acid was that the 55-year-old, apparently fully potent, Sandoz LSD was experientially indistinguishable from other acid they’d tried.

Unfortunately, this subjective finding is unlikely to satisfy people who believe that street acid is impure and low quality. There could be two reasons why the effects of the Sandoz LSD were nearly identical to that of street LSD: good quality street acid could be as pure as Sandoz LSD, or the Sandoz LSD could have been impure or degraded. However, participants described feeling, both during and after the experience, that the quality was high and the potency undamaged; they considered the argument “street acid isn’t really like pure LSD” to be settled. ●



Vial of 1951 Sandoz LSD, © 2006 Erowid.org

*Following are short comments from four people who tried the 1951 Sandoz LSD.*

**I** FIRST TRIED ACID ABOUT 12 YEARS ago and have taken it a total of around 40 times. I've had blotter, microdots, and liquid LSD. The quality has varied from time to time and batch to batch, with some notable paper seeming to be clearly different than others and some seeming better. I heard about the debate regarding whether street acid was "real *d*-LSD" before I had ever tried it, but the resources I looked at in the early 1990s seemed to indicate that the material sold on blotter was, in fact, LSD.

I was excited about trying the material from Sandoz. I had no idea what to expect. I took an amount (in liquid) that was measured to be 150–170 µg of LSD, that is, if the crystalline material in the vial was 100% *d*-LSD. I have never had precisely measured LSD, but I had tried some of the brown microdots that were going around that looked like the ones Erowid wrote about in their *LSD Analysis* article in 2003, which said they were around 21 µg each. Four to six of those matched up with my previous experiences of a single hit of "strong" blotter.

As I started coming up on the Sandoz material, it felt like some of the better acid I'd tried. The peak several hours felt nearly identical to what I'd expect from taking eight or so of those brown dots or 1.5–2 hits of decent late 1990s blotter. It was good, but it was just like other acid. — Z

**I**'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF TAKING LSD more than 35 times over the past 15 years. I'm usually pretty careful about the quality of the material, as careful as I can be given that the process is to buy strips of blotter from a friend and go on their word that the quality is good.

Probably two thirds of my acid trips have been with blotter and the other third split between microdots or liquid. Overall, I've been very happy with the quality. I've never gotten inactive acid, and the weakest stuff I've ever had was described that way before I bought it, so I knew what I was getting. I've had material that seemed ultra-clean (whatever that means) and I've had trips where it seemed like I was getting more body tension and anxiety than usual, though nothing particularly bad. But despite the moderate variety in my experiences, and

the vague sense that one batch seems a little different than the next, it's certainly possible that it's all just normal variation in effects from pure LSD.

But I've also heard the stories that pure LSD, like Sandoz LSD or "orange sunshine" from the '60s, was somehow so much better than what's available today. So when I got the chance to try the 1951 Sandoz LSD, I was really interested to see what it would be like. I wondered if it would be weak, degraded. Or would it be way stronger than what we all expected, since it was the real deal?

I took approximately 100 µg and found it to be exactly what I'd expect from a solid single hit of good quality blotter. In terms of body load, the effects felt comparable to almost all batches of acid I've taken before. I wouldn't be able to tell the difference. It was a great experience, and for me helped answer the question of whether the acid I've had before was good material, and the answer is yes. — R

**I** FIRST TOOK LSD IN 1984 WHILE in high school. Since then, I have dropped acid perhaps sixty times, mainly in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Dealers back then usually claimed the "per hit" dose was 100 µg. Later in life I learned that this probably wasn't the case. However, most of the hits that I got were of similar potency, at least. Only once did I get some shit that was about half as strong as the hits I was used to.

I have taken "micro doses" a few times—perhaps 10–15 µg. Some friends swear by this use as a daily stimulant, increasing the dose slightly each day. I never warmed to this approach. It always created a feeling of not being comfortable in my own skin—tight and anxious, with trouble falling asleep afterwards. Side effects produced by LSD seem more pronounced when I take lower doses, since the main thing that I am getting from it is basically the side effects.

When I reach my "full dose" level—approximately 150 µg or above—my experiences are always within the scope of effects described in the LSD literature: from heavenly bliss voyages, to giggle fits, to psychological introspection, to hellish nightmares. I attribute the variance in effects to set and setting. I have never understood when people bitched about "bad acid", or how certain acid produced more physical side effects than other "cleaner" acid. This

has not been the case for me: the range of effects and side effects has been consistent, regardless of the source, and dependent on the dose that I took.

While acid was my drug of choice in my late teens and early twenties, I haven't taken it frequently since then. But of course I jumped at an opportunity to try Sandoz material. Since I saw the powder being weighed, and was privy to the dosing calculations and titration, I feel comfortable that I got reasonably close to 100 µg. I chose to take this lighter dose due to the party environment that I was in, and also so that I could obtain some better sense as to what a "known dose" of 100 µg feels like. I spent an enjoyable evening with friends and acquaintances, sharing a lot of laughter. Visuals were in full effect, but there was nothing transpersonal at this level. At one point, I was absolutely certain of a question that a friend was about to ask me, and then he asked it—a strange bit of telepathy, since the inquiry wasn't related directly to anything we were talking about. So there was some of that "magic" present that makes one want to believe that anything is possible.

Ultimately, consuming Sandoz material solidified my opinion that every time in the past when I took "street acid" the stuff that I was getting truly was LSD. The Sandoz LSD was great—it just wasn't any better. So don't let hippies who wax rhapsodic about the good old days and claim that "LSD is no longer LSD" fool you. "Bad acid" more likely indicates a "bad mindset", a "bad environment", or an incorrect dose, than any effect from some miniscule amount of impurity that might be present. — Fork

**I**'VE TAKEN LSD PROBABLY AROUND 30–40 times. Most of my experiences have been with blotter, but I've done liquid and microdots as well.

My experiences with LSD over the years have been varied. It can be tricky to differentiate which characteristics of an experience can be attributed to a drug versus set and setting.

With that disclaimer in mind, I must say that I could not tell the difference between the Sandoz LSD and any other form of LSD I've tried. I was certainly paying attention to this issue, as I've heard the claims that acid today isn't as good as it used to be, in the '50s and '60s, but I would have to say, based on my experiences, that acid is acid. — F

# The Spirit of Albert

BY FIRE & EARTH EROWID

Before the 2006 LSD Symposium in Basel officially started, a smaller event was held at the local Museum der Kulturen to honor Dr. Albert Hofmann, the inventor of LSD. Two hundred people gathered on January 11, 2006 to celebrate Albert's 100th birthday, and thank him for his contributions to Basel, Switzerland, and the world.

The proceedings included tributes by longtime friends, city officials and other notables. The majority of the speeches were in German, so those of us who are not German-fluent had time to soak up the dignified atmosphere of the gathering. The room—wood paneled with high ceilings and deep red walls covered with large classical portraits of staunch Swiss characters in giant neck ruffs—was overflowing with well-wishers, colleagues, and the press.

One of the two most surprising presentations was by a representative of Novartis Pharmaceuticals, the corporation that resulted from the 1996 merger between Ciba-Geigy and Sandoz, where Hofmann worked from 1929 to 1971. He gave a detailed overview of how important Dr. Hofmann's work had been to Sandoz, and how profitable his discoveries had been for

them. It was unexpected that this large international corporation was willing to tie itself so closely to Dr. Hofmann's work producing and promoting LSD. The most remarkable presentation was the reading of a letter by Mr. Moritz Leuenberger, President of the Swiss Confederation, who praised Albert as a very special Swiss citizen. He wrote, "Dear Albert—you as a mystic and a scientist have more freedom of thought than we politicians will ever have..."

A local politician followed, saying, "Only a few human beings discover something that moves the world. Only a very few lucky people live to be 100 years old. This region is very proud of having one of its citizens who did both."

Although most presenters mentioned his work with LSD, they focused primarily on Albert as a human being and scientist.

A reception with wine and snacks followed the formal function in the museum. Despite walking with the assistance of crutches, Albert stood unaided for nearly two hours during the reception, pressed upon by a constant stream of people wanting to meet him, thank him, shake his hand, or seize the



Albert Hofmann, inventor of LSD, on his 100th birthday

opportunity to have their photo taken with him. The stamina, patience and cheer with which he greeted those who sought his attention was amazing.

Myron Stolaroff introduced the two of us to Dr. Hofmann and we were thrilled when he recognized our names and thanked us for our work bringing his collection of LSD-related papers to the Internet; our excitement at his recognition made us realize that we were indeed Hofmann groupies. Albert said that his grandson had shown him the Hofmann Collection online and that he was "very,



Images from the 2006 LSD Symposium in Basel, Switzerland





## From Problem Child to Wonder Child

Following is an English translation of Albert Hofmann's final address to the LSD Symposium in Basel, Switzerland, January 15, 2006.

I have to find the right words to express my gratitude to you all. I don't know where I should begin, but perhaps best with God, and then come my parents and my teachers, then my godfather who allowed me to study chemistry because my parents had no money and I was pushed to become a businessman so I could earn money. My godfather paid for my studies so I had the opportunity to study chemistry. I would like to stick with thanking people, otherwise I will have too many things coming to mind that I'd like to say. I thank the organizers of this wonderful symposium, Lucius Werthmüller and Dieter Hagenbach, my dear old friends who produced it all. Many heartfelt thanks.

I also want to thank all those present who contribute to spreading through the world the message that LSD brings. And finally, I thank LSD, which made itself so discretely and mysteriously noticeable. I think that if I had worked totally cleanly that LSD could never have expressed itself. Somehow, it entered my body and made itself noticeable. It requested from me—since I was a seeker and a researcher—to investigate its origins. The experience I had, that first LSD trip, was unintentional. It was a wonderful experience and I had to find the cause of it. And on this search for its origin, I heard a mysterious voice that I could identify as the LSD. Without this small mishap that certainly was no mishap (it was surely destined to be my fate that I discover this substance), without my clean working, [...] without my good chemistry work, but also without my little uncleanliness, this gathering would not have been possible. But I believe that LSD told me: "Introduce me to the world, so that I will not be forgotten." I believe I have had the opportunity to have friends through whom the voice of LSD has spread, all the way to this wonderful conference.

And it will go further, through you, to make its presence known in the world. I thank you all for showing up here [...] in honor of my "problem child", that through this event has become a wonder child.



Art by Dirk Bonsma

very pleased" that it was now widely available, and he was happy with how we'd handled the papers. He spoke to us in both English and German and was surprisingly sharp and lucid. We can only hope that we will be as intellectually intact if we survive as long as he has.

### THE CONFERENCE

On Friday, as the Spirit of Basel symposium got underway (organized by the Gaia Media Foundation), we were once again struck by Dr. Hofmann's mental acuity; he spoke from memory, with no notes, for 30–45 minutes. Each time he presented during the weekend it was always with clarity and consistency.

The general mood of the conference attendees was extremely buoyant. We chatted with hundreds of people over the course of the weekend. One of the most frequent questions we were asked was whether we thought this conference represented a turning point of some kind in the cultural view or status of LSD. While that question remains to be answered in the future, people were excited by the momentous feeling of the gathering.

We spent the weekend (when we weren't scrambling to finish the slides for our presentation) pondering what about this event engaged people so effectively, even people who had been to dozens of similar conferences and

were jaded to the familiar format. There is something compelling about the fact that the man who discovered LSD—who has had a 60-year relationship with the substance—still speaks eloquently about its value to humanity after having reached the remarkable age of 100 years.

Whether or not it is reasonable to extrapolate from this single data point, it seems a clear falsification of many of the direst claims about LSD's negative effects on the brain and mind.

There were more than 70 presenters speaking about a variety of topics ranging from harm reduction to scientific research to astrology, though most stuck to details about the history, chemistry, therapeutic applications and cultural impact of LSD.

There were also a large number of media representatives and reporters present. We, along with many of the presenters, were hounded repeatedly to do video and radio interviews. We decided to say yes to a number of them, something we have not often done before.

Though there is a lot more to say about our time in Basel, it was a fun trip and a great, well-organized conference. ●

*For more stories, descriptions, photos, and audio/video clips about the Symposium, visit:*

*Erowid.org/extracts/n10/lsd\_symposium.shtml*

# 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.*

## Image Vaults



Photo by Erowid

Published images	6,105	Viewed each day	69,036
Published in last 6 mo.	389	Submitted each day	7
Awaiting processing	3,388	Image Vaults	229

## Erowid Center as Stanford MBA Case Study

In October 2005, a group of students in Stanford's Masters in Business Administration program selected Erowid as a case study for a class about non-profits. The students interviewed Fire and Earth about Erowid's mission, philosophy, history, audience, and practices, and reviewed a number of documents about the project.

It was interesting to try to describe Erowid to a group of people with little background in the field. We were put on the spot as we tried to succinctly describe our "business model", explain why we've made the choice not to sell advertising space on the site, and discuss some of the difficulties of forming the Erowid Center non-profit corporation.

When the case study was completed, it was presented to the class and became a part of the growing library of case studies used in the Stanford program. A few months ago, we received the following feedback from the leader of the student team:

*"In the Strategic Leadership of Non-profits course at Stanford [part of the Masters in Business Administration Program], we studied dozens of organizations, most of which were many times both the size and the age of Erowid.*

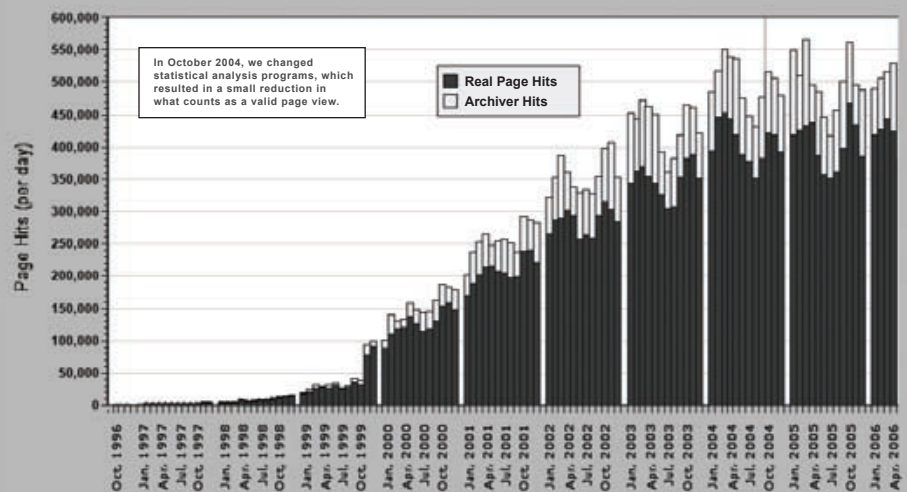
*We chose to write a case study of Erowid, and after working with Earth and Fire for just a short time, I can say that the care with which they consider the opportunities and challenges facing them, combined with their ability to articulate their vision, places them among the very most thoughtful and passionate non-profit leaders.*

*When presenting the Erowid case to the class, the students were glued to their seats and totally engaged by both the challenges and by the tremendous growth that Erowid has achieved with the most modest funding levels."* — K.C.

## Experience Reports

Published reports	10,299
Published in last 6 mo.	844
Fully triaged reports	10,885
Partially triaged reports	2,910
Un-triaged reports	12,047
Viewed each day	72,368
Submitted each day	23
Substances included	373
Active triagers	36

## Site Traffic (1996-2006)



## Spring 2006 Matching Grant

In May 2006, we finished a \$10,000 matching fund campaign during which we offered supporters signed copies of the final installment in Dale Pendell's trilogy: *Pharmako/Gnosis*. Thanks to Shawn Hailey for his generous grant, to Dale for his contribution of books, and to everyone who donated during this drive.

## EcstasyData

Starting in January 2006, Sara H. began working on grant applications to foundations to seek funding for the ecstasy testing project. We're expecting it to take more than a year before we could receive any grant funding for EcstasyData, but we think this process is crucial for the long-term success of the project.

In May 2006, the project received an \$11,000 donation to support pill testing. Per the donor's request, we will be waiving the co-pay for the 100 pills tested with this donation. Thanks to Sara, AJ and everyone who has helped keep ecstasy testing results flowing.

## Visionary Art Vaults



Published pieces	1,685	New pieces in last 6 mo.	148
Number of artists	483	New artists in last 6 mo.	40
Viewed per day	7,258	Curated by Christopher Barnaby	

## EcstasyData.org

<b>2006</b>	Daily Visitors	3,611	Daily Page Hits	28,044
	Tablets Tested	11	Daily File Hits	444,574
<b>BY YEAR</b>	<b>Tablets Tested</b>		<b>Testing Results (1999-2006)</b>	
	<b>2005</b>	133	Total Tablets Tested	1,478
	<b>2004</b>	151	MDMA Only (38%)	569
	<b>2003</b>	148	MDMA + something (17%)	245
	<b>2002</b>	301	No MDMA (45%)	664
<b>2001</b>	332	- Nothing	95	

In March 2006, bluelight.nu and pillreports.nu members paid for the testing of an unusual blue tablet in the shape of a diamond. It contained diphenhydramine and MDMA.

## Membership

Current members	1,246
Expired members	2,124
Members in U.S.	897 (72%)
Members in other countries	349 (28%)
Countries with members	35
Top 10 membership countries	
USA (897); UK (73); Canada (66); Australia (45); Germany (22); Netherlands (16); Switzerland (15); France (12); New Zealand (10); Norway (9)	

## Content

Content pages	34,509
Number of substance vaults	295
Most popular substance vaults:	
MDMA; Cannabis; LSD; Mushrooms; Cocaine; Methamphetamine; <i>Salvia divinorum</i> ; Morning Glory; DXM; Opiates; DMT; Heroin; Ketamine; Mescaline	
Most accessed documents:	
Drug Testing Basics; LSD Effects; MDMA Effects; Mushroom Effects; Cannabis Effects; Salvia Effects	

For the first time, traffic for a series of plant vaults (including ibogaine, passion flower, and *Anadenanthera*) has surpassed what used to be a more popular set of chemicals vaults (5-meo-DiPT, DPT, 4-acetoxy-DiPT, and PMA).

## Erowid Traffic Statistics

<b>2006</b>	Daily Visitors	50,649	Daily File Hits	3,018,041
	Daily Transfer	23.48 GB	Daily Page Hits	427,459
<b>BY MONTH</b>		Avg Daily File Hits	Avg Daily Page Hits	Avg Daily Visitors
	<b>Apr 2006</b>	2,996,790	422,544	50,498
	<b>Mar 2006</b>	3,082,255	442,267	52,265
	<b>Feb 2006</b>	3,066,564	426,723	51,048
	<b>Jan 2006</b>	2,926,553	418,300	48,787
	<b>Dec 2005</b>	2,710,008	387,237	45,591
<b>BY YEAR</b>	<b>2005</b>	2,544,202	402,567	41,412
	<b>2004</b>	1,799,694	405,528	31,241
	<b>2003</b>	1,421,815	349,530	25,997
	<b>2002</b>	1,206,855	283,541	23,042

# VERBATIM

**"I have no scepter, but I have a pen."**  
— Voltaire (1694–1778)

**"Begin somewhere; you cannot build a reputation on what you intend to do."**  
— Liz Smith (b. 1923)

**"All I ask of in the world is just one day after another with nothing planned."**  
— Louise Fitzhugh (1928–1974),  
in *Harriet the Spy*

**"No question is so difficult to answer as that to which the answer is obvious."**  
— George Bernard Shaw  
(1856–1950)

**"No drug, not even alcohol, causes the fundamental ills of society. If we're looking for the source of our troubles, we shouldn't test people for drugs, we should test them for stupidity, ignorance, greed and love of power."**  
— Patrick J. O'Rourke (b. 1947)

**"Perhaps to some extent we have lost sight of the fact that LSD can be very, very helpful in our society if used properly."**  
— Robert F. Kennedy (1925–1968)

**"The dullard finds even wine tasteless, while the sorcerer is intoxicated by the mere sight of water."**  
— Hakim Bey (b. 1945)

**"Consciousness is much more than the thorn, it is the dagger in the flesh."**  
— Emile M. Cioran (1911–1995)

**"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."**  
— Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss)  
(1904–1991)

**"Experience is a hard teacher. She gives the test first and the lesson after."**  
— Vernon Law (b. 1930)

**"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)

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## Die Evolution der Menschheit besteht in der Veränderung des Bewusstseins.

[The evolution of humankind lies in the alteration of consciousness.]

— Albert Hofmann (b. 1906)

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**"I'm the man I am today, thanks to Albert Hofmann and Buddha."**  
— Robert Anton Wilson (b. 1932)

**"High station in life is earned by the gallantry with which appalling experiences are survived with grace."**  
— Thomas L. ("Tennessee") Williams  
(1911–1983)

**"One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important."**  
— Bertrand Russell (1872–1970)

**"Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely."**  
— Rodin (1840–1970)

**"Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."**  
— Aldous Huxley (1894–1963)

**"Don't join the book burners. Don't think you're going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book..."**  
— Dwight D. Eisenhower  
(1890–1969)

**"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."**  
— Max Planck (1858–1947)

**"Life-transforming ideas have always come to me through books."**  
— Bell Hooks (b. 1952)

**"Reading, after a certain age, diverts the mind too much from its creative pursuits. Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking."**  
— Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

**"The multitude of books is making us ignorant."**  
— Voltaire (1694–1778)

**"A good artist learns that what gets you into trouble in high school is worth paying attention to."**  
— Alix Olson (b. 1975)

**"Things forbidden have a secret charm."**  
— Tacitus (c. 56–c. 117)