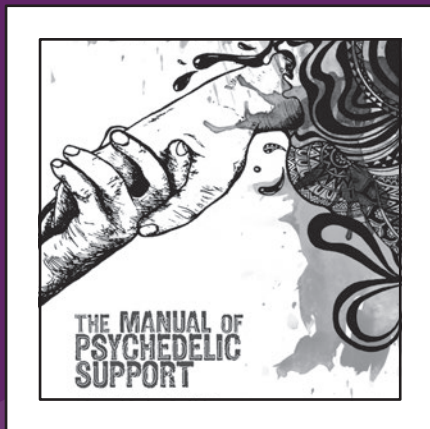
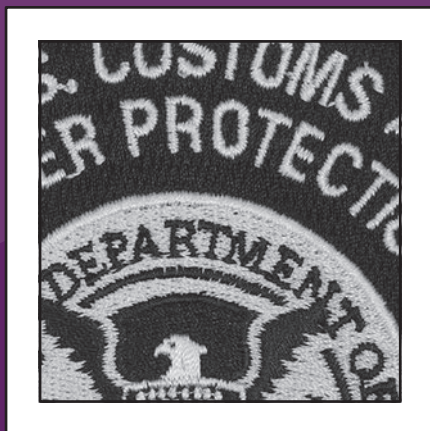
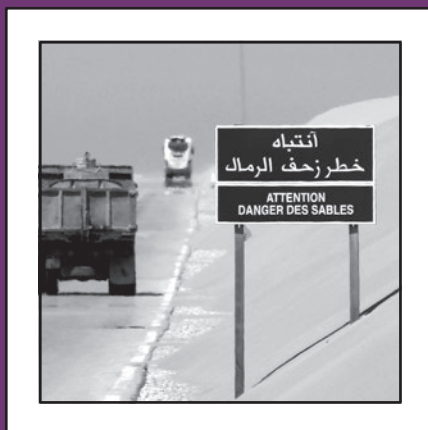
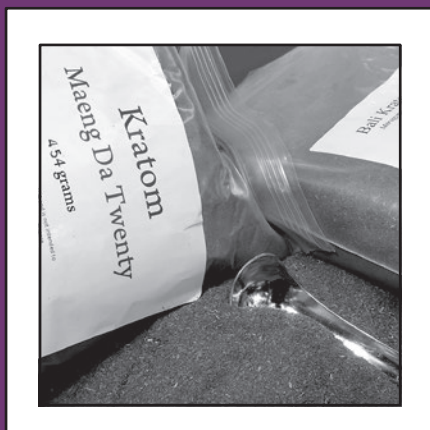


Erowid Extracts

DOCUMENTING THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND PSYCHOACTIVES

May 2015

Number 27



On Kratom • Shulgin Archiving Dispatch • The Customs of a Coca Connoisseur
If I Do My Job Well, You Can't Tell I'm Here • Teatime: Common Sense

LETTERS & FEEDBACK

The wealth of knowledge, the equality, the openness, and the urge for public knowledge, information, and safety blows my mind every time I visit your site.

—S.V.
Email to Erowid

I'm 24 years old and have been visiting Erowid since I was in 6th grade (2002). I recently graduated from University with honors and a biology degree. I was accepted to medical school but was hesitant to go. I have always been amazingly fascinated by psychopharmacology, and medicine just didn't seem like the right path.

After losing a family member to suicide, it hit me that despite the MD route being a sure way to a six-figure salary, success as measured by society, and adoration from peers and family, it simply was not for me. I graciously thanked the medical school and withdrew my seat.

I'm now on the path to attaining my PharmD, though I have no desire to perform research within a corporation. I have every intention of being involved in blossoming research with THC and other psychoactive compounds. Psychedelics are going to be next and, with that, an explosion in research into how these compounds are more effective at treating the plethora of psychiatric diseases than the current arsenal of pharmaceutical drugs.

I've always felt the need to tell y'all just how important your site is to me, so why not today? There is no purpose to my message other than a glimpse into my life and a thank you to those who helped create and maintain this beautiful source of knowledge that, without a doubt, is expediting the waking up of our society :)

— T.C.
Email to Erowid

My "Solve et Elucido" art arrived a couple of weeks ago—and it's amazing. I absolutely love it and it's now in a great spot on the wall.

— C.M.
Brazil

I was absolutely delighted to read the article, "A Long Strange Trip", in the March issue of *Nylon Guys* magazine (a publication I had not encountered before) and to learn more about a couple of people that have helped me tremendously.

As a resource, Erowid.org has been invaluable to me and several of my friends. I truly believe that having access to the information is one of the reasons that I am still alive today. I commend you guys for having the vision, courage, and dedication to provide this reference for people.

Instead of taking one of the many sides of the War on Drugs, you guys are simply helping. Erowid and the principles and ideas for which it stands are part of the solution. Please continue to educate people and one day perhaps the current cultural paradigm will change.

— R.S.
From a US Correctional Institution

Let me congratulate you for your well-deserved donation. I have used the site for more than a decade now, and when I saw you won a big donation from Reddit I was elated for you. Well earned.

— P.C.K.
Email to Erowid

I love your website. It has saved my life plenty of times. If there was no EcstasyData I wouldn't be here. Thank you so much for all the good test results you've given us about the pills we were taking.

— MIKE
Email to Erowid

As an educated British white male, with a formal education in the arts, I find Erowid a valuable resource, one that I have used since 2009 to learn more about plant medicine in the context of Shamanism.

[...] Erowid has proven time and time again to be a trustworthy site, not infected by political correctness.

— JAMES KAYE
GreatNonProfits.org

The experience reports are so incredibly useful for understanding what is to be learned from the DMT experience. I never would have thought in my wildest dreams that what I had wondered about pertaining to DMT would basically all be answered from one single website.

[...] Erowid is easily one of the single greatest ways humans can collaborate for the effort of enlightenment. I didn't quite realize that until recently but I always knew you were a gem of the internet. Thank you, and may your moments in life be divine.

— T.A.
Email to Erowid

There is SO MUCH damn information on this site concerning drugs, spirituality, consciousness...and I mean that in a good way. This includes cited factual information, personal experiences, anecdotes, concerned warnings, and so much else.

It's an incredibly well rounded, helpful, informative, and interesting source of information. You can see how dedicated and professional the collaborators of the site are. I feel like the intense passion behind nonprofit organizations like these is the only thing that could create such a great product.

— JJK49
GreatNonProfits.org

One of the most eye opening, helpful, and educational sites on the internet. The true epitome of what it means to understand something, not just fear it or hate it because you don't understand.

— GABEFF
GreatNonprofits.org

Send correspondence to:
extracts@erowid.org

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

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Erowid Center's mission is to provide and facilitate access to objective, accurate, and non-judgmental information about plants, chemicals, technologies, and related issues that affect the mind, body, and culture. Erowid Center supports and trains libraries, publishers, and other information distributors on issues related to these fields.

It is also Erowid Center's goal to support medical, legal, scientific, academic, and independent experts in developing and publishing related resources.

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

Crazy High-Dose Ecstasy Tablets

Pressed tablets bearing the “UPS” logo and containing over 200 mg MDMA lead to several hospitalizations in the UK and Europe.
(Early 2015)

Many Drugs Legal in Ireland for 48 hrs

Irish court finds procedure used to criminalize new drugs unconstitutional and drugs including MDMA and ketamine are legal for 48 hours before new constitutional law is passed. Parties ensue.
(Mar 2015)

Reminder: Oral Cannabis is Powerful!

After a series of high profile oral cannabis overdoses result in hospitalizations and a *New York Times* editorial, states move to reconsider labeling of edible products.
(2014)

DEA Warns of Stoned Rabbits

While arguing against medical cannabis, DEA agent testifies to Utah Senate that he'd seen “rabbits that had cultivated a taste for the marijuana” in outdoor grow ops.
(Mar 2015)

Erowid and MAPS Win Reddit Giveaway

Assisted by amazing Redditors and social networks, Erowid came in 4th place (ahead of National Public Radio and Wikipedia), winning \$82,765.95 of support for harm reduction and education efforts.
(Feb 2015)

Ethnobotanical Stewardship Conflict

The young ESC declares itself the arbiter of a “consensus” process for deciding the future of global ayahuasca policies and practices, then finds itself on the losing side of a war of words with ayahuasca experts led by Bia Labate.
(Late 2014/Early 2015)

Harmine for Diabetes

Media rides coattails of psychedelic popularity and declares ayahuasca may be used to treat diabetes, based on mouse research showing harmine may help produce insulin.
(Early 2015)

Proposal to Reschedule Cannabis

Bipartisan medical marijuana bill would move cannabis to Schedule II, resulting in a massive change to US public policy, which has been out of synch with medical science for over 50 years.
(Mar 2015)

Pope Francis Condemns Drug Legalization

Although more liberal than previous popes, Francis refers to legalization and harm reduction as “yielding” to “evil”. He could be the last pope from a pre-1960s adult generation.
(Jun 2014)

Heroin Sold as Cocaine in Amsterdam

Printed posters and roadside traffic signs warn tourists of dangerous “cocaine”, stating prominently, “you will not be arrested for using drugs in Amsterdam.”
(Dec 2014)

Psychedelics Not Found to Cause Mental Health Problems...Again

Using data from the US's largest drug use survey, with hundreds of thousands of respondents, no association is found between trying “classic psychedelics” and worsened mental health.
(Mar 2015)

Psychedelics Reduce Suicide?

The same epidemiological studies that find no association between psychedelics and mental health problems show a reduced rate of suicide among those who have tried these drugs.
(Early 2015)

All Drug Possession Quietly Decriminalized in California

Winning 59% of the popular vote, Prop 47 reduces most drug possession offenses to low-level misdemeanors instead of felonies.

(Nov 2014)

Georgia Drug Task Force's Okra Raid

Heavily armed Georgia state police team raids retiree's backyard okra patch, based on helicopter surveillance reporting it was cannabis.

(Oct 2014)

Australia Makes Moves to Ban Kava

Initial steps are taken by legislators in Australia to ban kava kava, arguing organized crime involvement, but Pacific Islander indigenous citizens are fighting back.

(Feb 2015)

FDA Warns against "Natural" Sex Drugs

FDA issues warnings about nine brands of "all natural" male erection enhancers, finding they all contain unlabeled sildenafil (Viagra).

(Mar 2015)

Erowid Navigator Android App Spreads

After less than a year, this volunteer-developed app is going strong with 4,000 current users!

(Mar 2015)

DC Cannabis Legalization Slips In

Washington DC voters legalize cannabis, Congress fights back, but fails to adequately block the legality of recreational pot inside the Beltway.

(Early 2015)

DC Cannabis Seed Giveaway!

As a "fuck off" to Congress, group holds cannabis seed giveaway, drawing thousands who wait in lines around the block to get free seeds.

(Mar 2015)

Evolution Marketplace Pulls Exit Scam

After becoming the #1 Tor-only drug marketplace in 2014, Evolution closes and administrators steal all Bitcoins in escrow account. Black market musical chair exit scams are now the norm.

(Mar 2015)

Silk Road Founder Convicted

Ross Ulbricht is convicted of narcotics and money laundering conspiracies and a "kingpin" charge.

(Feb 2015)

New Psychoactive Periodical

A new producer of psychoactive periodicals, Psychedelic Press UK, completes its first publication year with five ~100-page issues.

(2014)

@ErowidRecruiter

Markov-algorithm Twitter bot creates mashups of Erowid Experience Reports and tech-job recruiter emails. The oddly amusing feed attracts 6,673 followers in two months.

(Mar 2015)

•

"Fueled by real-time data analytics platform which aggregates and analyzes billions of universes."

•

"I almost got hit by some unknown force; a force whose sole purpose is to simplify medical offices with web-based medical billing."

Alexander Shulgin Lionized

Hundreds attend Sasha's farewell gathering in Berkeley, California. Professor David Presti notes that Sasha should receive Nobel Prize.

(Jun 2014)

Cannabinoid Analysis Goes Wild

Prior to CO and WA legalization, most cannabinoid analysis was secret. Wider lab analysis will improve understanding of what's being smoked.

(2014)

Erowid & EcstasyData in the Media

EcstasyData is featured in a *New York Magazine* look at the contents of street ecstasy and *Nylon Guys* publishes article about Erowid co-founders.

(Mar 2015)

Pathetic Cannabis Policy Continues

Despite progressive intentions, the Obama White House continues to "steadfastly oppose legalization of marijuana and other drugs". Barack was a documented stoner in high school.

(March 2015)

IF I DO MY JOB WELL You Can't Tell I'm Here

A Tale of an Erowid Sysadmin
by JL

Working for Erowid is a unique experience. There is no office and there are no core hours—we coordinate via email and chat when working hours overlap. This means I can do what a lot of people dream about: make the whole world my office. I am slowly moving around the globe with just a backpack full of technology and a single bag of clothes.

My original home base is in Germany. As I write this I am in the Dominican Republic. When these lines go to print, I will be on Curaçao, and when you receive the July 2015 issue of *Extracts*, I'll probably be logging in from Colombia. But for most of 2014, I lived in a small fishing village in the south of Morocco. Every few weeks I rented a car to explore the country. I've had tea with Sahrawi fishermen; attended couscous parties at friends' houses (the big family lunch that is taken after prayer on Fridays in Islam); given

hitchhiking cops a lift to their checkpoint in Western Sahara; visited the "forbidden city" of Smara; and spent countless hours learning traditional healing methods from a Berber herbalist in Fez. All without ever leaving my office.

Of course, it's not all sunshine: Erowid cannot pay more than one fifth of what I could make in the for-profit industry. Thus it's not just "get a plane ticket and rent a nice place". But falling asleep every night with the knowledge that I'm working for a great project that helps so many people is priceless. And, I am blessed to be working with two people who dedicate their life to a globally-influential project, some world-class senior co-sysadmins, and a lot of awesome volunteers who put in as much time as they can afford. Shukran, gracias, merci, danke, many thanks to all of you! Let's keep on rocking!



All photos by JL.

My typical day starts with a quadruple espresso, a hello to headquarters via IRC, a quick check of the servers and multiple monitoring services to make sure there are no catastrophes, and then an evaluation of the systems' health. Public-facing site? Check. Backend machines 1 through 3? Check. The 12 virtual machines? Check. After reading 40+ emails of detailed system status information, I'll have likely cursed at least once, usually about some new security update that needs to be done "right now".

A constant stream of robots accesses Erowid, from the friendly Googlebot (checking for updated content), to the out-of-control scraper spiders (run by the student who wants to grab a "copy" of Erowid without realizing their bot can't handle it), to the hostile attackers (distributed denial of service attacks, or DDoS). It's important to keep a tab on heavy-hitting traffic to make sure it doesn't cause Erowid.org to become slow or unresponsive. A single minute of downtime means seventy people can't access the information they were looking for. Existing at the

same domain name for twenty years means that our servers are subject to constant attack from around the world. Few appear to be targeted at Erowid specifically, and instead are just attacks against any popular web service.

By the time this daily routine is complete, somewhere between thirty minutes and three hours have passed, and then I have an actual breakfast.

Next, it's on to the more complex projects, all the while keeping an eye on the monitoring systems that dutifully inform us of problems in real time.

Some of these bigger sysadmin tasks of the last twelve months have included:

- Migrating all our backend installations (such as our email management and site statistics systems) into “jails”, which is FreeBSD-lingua for “virtual machines”. One can think of them as private cloud setups—private so that we don't hand data over to third parties.
- Moving all WordPress instances (the software used for the Erowid Review and columns like Teatime) into a dedicated virtual machine so that the inevitable next WordPress exploit will not endanger data on Erowid.org itself. WordPress is notorious for security breaches that allow malicious software to be run on the exploited machine.
- Updating Erowid.org to the current version of Apache, the webserver we use. The webserver is the main software that delivers pages to readers. This might not sound like much of a task, but Erowid's complex structure made it a big deal.
- Establishing better monitoring for Erowid's systems, which has served us well when dealing with performance degradations or a recent (small) DDoS attack.

One longer-term Very Important Project I've been working on when I have time is developing a separate website to empower volunteers to work on Erowid's code and allow visitors to prioritize improvements to the site by vote. It's 90% done and I am positive we can launch it publicly later this year. Keeping Erowid.org accessible and secure is my number one priority, so this project, while important, has repeatedly been put on the back burner.

Over the past year, we've had to deal with:

- about 200 software security updates
- two machines that were unresponsive because one of our hosting providers screwed up
- one hard disk failure
- lots of script kiddies trying their automated exploit tools on us (here's a hint: stop looking for win.ini—this file does not exist on a FreeBSD server)
- innumerable misconfigured scrapers that hit Erowid.org with way too many requests in way too short intervals, thereby overloading the server.

It's satisfying to be part of the Erowid project, but it's a surprising amount of hard work that (assuming it's done right) will never be noticed by visitors. ●



COMMON Sense

by the Teafærie

It's high time for every self-respecting large-scale festival to establish a dedicated psychedelic support space and to offer free drug testing services as a matter of course. These ought to be basic modules that festival organizers

THE REALITY IS THAT PSYCHEDELIC AND EUPHORIC STIMULANT USE IS DEEPLY ENDEMIC TO THE ENTIRE [FESTIVAL] CULTURE.

automatically account for in their budgets, just like medical services, security, and sanitation teams.

The omission of a sanctuary space should be regarded as a critical oversight, indicative of a production company that is both dangerously irresponsible and embarrassingly out of touch with the evolving gestalt.

The teahouse is often the *de facto* psychedelic oasis in Festival Land. It tends to stay open all night, and provides a safe, soft and supportive environment to simply chill out in for a little while. Some of the best travelling teahouses have been deliberately designed to serve as designated psychedelic support spaces at events that quite rightfully perceive the

necessity for such services, but which are nevertheless reticent to officially sponsor them. The truly excellent Full Circle Teahouse is a marvelous example of this phenomenon. In addition to being a bottomless source of good vibes and free tea, it is typically staffed more or less exclusively by people who just so happen to have experience helping fellow psychonauts navigate their way through what can sometimes turn out to be unexpectedly intense journeywork. I know this because I've been honored to serve there myself a few times. But teahouses are not often marked as psychedelic support spaces on the official event maps. It's sort of a word of mouth thing. Event staffers who've been around the block a few times just seem to know where to direct attendees who appear to be in need of special assistance.

I've also worked as a fairly regular adjunct to a particularly sophisticated medical team. This has always been on a volunteer basis, though I've gone through the trouble of getting my first aid and CPR certification (which are good things to know about, anyway) in order to qualify for free or reduced price tickets as a "medical assistant". As far as the festival officially knows, I'm just there to hand out band-aids and earplugs. But when somebody comes in who has wiped out in deep water and feels like they're hanging on for dear life, the Teafærie is there to try to calm them down and to help them get back up on their psychedelic

surfboard. There's not usually a lot of extra space in the medical tent, though. And when somebody comes in with a broken leg, heat stroke, or other serious issue, they naturally get first priority and I occasionally have to take my special friends out for a little walk.

So why, you may well be asking, don't these events simply set up a clearly marked and mapped psychedelic support space staffed with well-educated and experienced tripsitters? Wouldn't that be better than a bunch of head cases bouncing around causing havoc in the medical tent, or worse, having very public freakouts and ending up in the tender care of the somewhat less than compassionate security team?

The answer is an ironic one. You see, harm reduction services are actually illegal in the United States. Kind of. Maybe. Depending upon how one interprets the RAVE Act (Reducing Americans' Vulnerability to Ecstasy Act), which is a piece of legislation that was first introduced in the Senate in 2002 by Joe Biden, among others. When re-introduced in 2003 (with Hillary Clinton as one of its co-sponsors), it failed to pass on its own. It was retweaked just a little bit and rebranded as the Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act, which was slipped into the certain-to-pass PROTECT Act of 2003, the law that created the AMBER Alert system, related to stopping child abductions. It was passed without public debate.

The Act makes it unlawful to “make available for use” any place “for the purpose of unlawfully manufacturing, storing, distributing, or using a controlled substance.” The penalties associated with it are severe enough to take down an entire production company if it happens to fall afoul of it. So everybody who is already walking that fine line is quite naturally afraid to push the boundaries, especially EDM (electronic dance music) festivals, which fall under particular scrutiny.

The problem is with its “for the purpose of [...] using a controlled substance” language, which has been broadly interpreted to target producers who have demonstrated the courage and foresight to offer any sort of harm reduction services whatsoever. This leads to producers being afraid to make chill rooms available or provide free drinking water. Some are even afraid to sell freaking lightsticks for dogsakes, simply because they’re associated with drug use in some people’s minds. So they’re more than a little bit cagey about sponsoring something as obviously drug-related as an official psychedelic support space. To say nothing of inviting the participation of organizations like DanceSafe or BunkPolice, which provide information about various

substances to attendees, as well as sometimes offering on-site field testing services. Their handy-dandy little reagent kits can’t definitively determine what a substance is, nor can they tell what the dose of a tablet or capsule might be. But reagent tests are useful as teaching tools. Harm reduction groups on site at festivals can help people make slightly more informed, better decisions about whether or not they really want to ingest that white powder some shifty entrepreneur in the parking lot assured them was “pure molly”.

The current state of affairs more or less forces many event organizers to engage in a hypocritical charade. There’s not a single EDM production company in the entire world that doesn’t know damned good and well that at least some amount of drug use is bound to end up taking place at their events. And they wouldn’t actually want to stop that from happening even if they could, which they totally can’t. Because the reality is that psychedelic and euphoric stimulant use is deeply endemic to the entire culture. It’s a big part of its *raison d’être*. This is obvious to anyone who has ever attended any of these sorts of music festivals. It wouldn’t exactly take Sherlock Holmes to figure it out just by glancing at one of their fliers, most

of which feature explicitly psychedelic artwork and boast a long list of DJs with names like MC DMT and Doctor Tripmaster.

But in order to cover their own asses they all tend to bill themselves as “drug-free” events anyway, and they also put on some TSA style “security theatre” where they make attendees wait in long lines to have their bags lightly searched. This admittedly keeps some big time dealers from bringing in whole backpacks full of merchandise, which is probably a very good thing. They’re not really trying to find everybody’s personal use stashes, though. Because if they successfully did that, then their festival would fail. So they make a big show of kicking out a few kids who happen to get unlucky, whilst turning an apparently blind eye to the essential nature of the psychedelic dance culture

WHY, YOU MAY WELL BE ASKING, DON'T THESE EVENTS SIMPLY SET UP A CLEARLY MARKED AND MAPPED PSYCHEDELIC SUPPORT SPACE?

phenomenon underlying the very foundation of their entire existence. (And generates billions of dollars per year worldwide...)

If the goal is genuinely to try to protect people, then the best thing that concerned parents and everybody else can actually do is to make sure that potential drug users educate themselves with the kind of unbiased, vetted, and reliable information that is available through Erowid and elsewhere. We need access to drug testing, too. Especially right now, when the designer drug market is blowing up like crazy. There are brand spanking new research chemicals that are getting cranked out on practically a weekly basis, and a lot of them are being misrepresented



The Teafærie's "Sanctuary" T-shirt

as “ecstasy” or “molly” or “acid” or as something else that sounds relatively safe and familiar at the point of sale. This is where the real danger is right now. The only practical way to ameliorate that danger (other than legalizing a few of the

than people who were swayed into taking something by a positive identification. Likewise, nobody takes way more drugs than they were already intending to just because they’ve heard that there is a truly excellent psychedelic sanctuary somewhere on site. The notion is ridiculous.

Laws like the Rave Act hurt far more folks than they help, and everybody who is actually involved knows that. So what’s to be done?

A few American festivals have been brave and honorable enough to just go ahead and provide extensive harm reduction services anyway, and I salute the fuck out of them. The last large event that I officially worked Ground Control at had quite a steady stream of clientele, several of whom were very deep in their process. If we hadn’t been there, some of these people would probably have ended up having their full-on shamanic death-and-rebirth experiences just rolling around in the dirt down by the porta-potties. But instead, they were brought to a safe loving place where they could be properly cared for and congratulated. This made a whole lot of difference in most of their outcomes.

Each production company has to assess its particular legal situation and to weigh that against its own perceived responsibility to ensure the relative safety of attendees. It’s going to come down to what they care about more. If they decide that they simply can’t take the risk of providing basic harm reduction services yet, then they should at least have a booth that explains just exactly why that is, and that provides information about both what they themselves are doing about it, and what their participants can personally do in order to try to improve the situation in the future.

There is a petition going around to amend the RAVE Act (AmendTheRaveAct.org), and that’s certainly a good place to begin. It was started last year by Dede Goldsmith, the mother of Shelley Goldsmith, who died in 2013 from

apparent heat stroke at a party that was too afraid of that backwards law to provide so much as a simple chill room. The goal of the petition is to amend the ambiguous language so that event organizers can implement common sense safety measures to protect their patrons without fear of prosecution by the federal authorities. (If the Teafærie

Hey...parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, Teafærie is talking to you. It's your younger family members and their friends who are hurt by this terrible policy.

— Fire & Earth

was writing the amendment I would make it so that EDM events would actually be *obligated* to provide basic harm reduction services, but simply decriminalizing them would certainly be better than nothing.) I would really love it if more concerned parents, in particular, would publicly take up

**YOU SEE, HARM
REDUCTION SERVICES
ARE ACTUALLY ILLEGAL
IN THE UNITED STATES.
KIND OF. MAYBE.**

this cause. I truly believe that it could radically alter the whole landscape of the debate fairly quickly.

We can all also take on a little bit of personal responsibility by acquiring our own drug testing kits so that we can help our friends and neighbors to better identify whatever they might have gotten ahold of.



**YIELD
TO
COMMON
SENSE**

better-known substances), is to make it safe and easy for people to find out more about what they’re considering putting into their bodies. Widespread testing would also de-incentivize both adulteration and straight-up substitution from the dealers’ perspective, because the last thing they want is a bunch of irate customers coming back to them in five minutes waving evidence that they were sold bogus goods.

Drug testing services don’t encourage drug use any more than giving out free condoms encourages sexual promiscuity. Of course, the more thoughtful and responsible partygoers might not be willing to take anything at all unless they really thought that they knew what it was. (Hooray for common sense!) But, in the absence of harm reduction services, most people are simply going to do whatever it is that they want to do anyway, just a little bit less safely. I’ve personally seen a far greater number of people decide *not* to take a drug when it tested out as something unfamiliar

And we can familiarize ourselves with some basic techniques for helping people to manage unexpectedly challenging experiences. A bunch has been written on this topic, for instance Erowid's "Psychedelic Crisis FAQ" or "Ground Control: A Sitter's Primer", the first thing that the Teafærie ever published on Erowid. A wonderful reference guide just came out called the *Manual of Psychedelic Support* (page 10), and the PDF is available for free online under a Creative Commons license. Because its creators are all awesome like that. It is the product of years of work and a whole heck of a lot of field research by the people who've put on the excellent KosmiCare installation at the BOOM Festival in Portugal for over a decade, and many other similar collectives around the world.

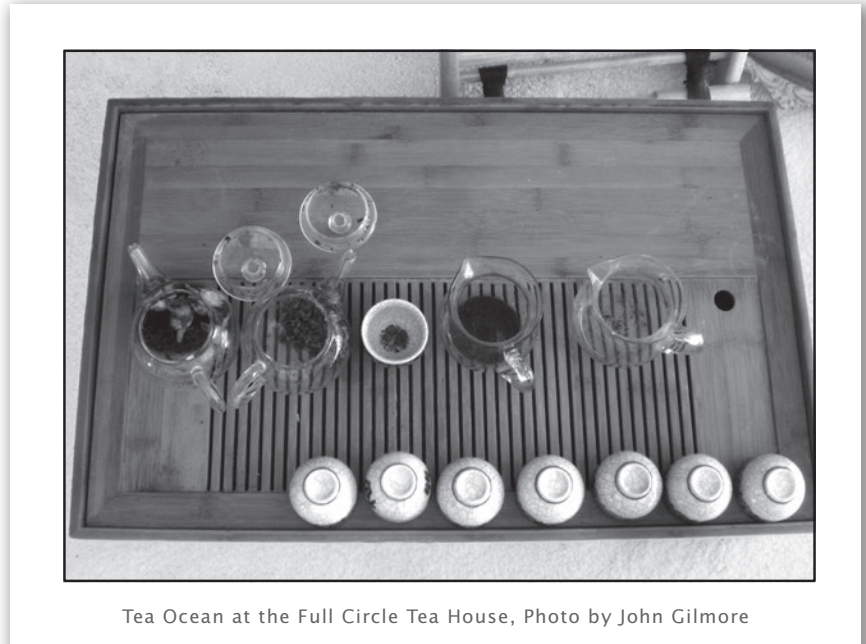
I foresee the need for a few more professional psychedelic support teams, because there are simply a far greater number of festivals and events these days than the existing collectives can handle. Plus the demand for these services will grow, as awareness increases about the importance of psychospiritual harm reduction. We just have to shift the conversation, and get that stupid law changed.

WE HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER: BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT COMMUNITIES DO.

There will be folks who have difficult experiences at events. Far fewer of them will end up feeling deeply traumatized if they have the support of a knowledgeable and empathetic trip sitter. So which kind of festival do you want your kids (or your grandkids, or your nieces and nephews, or even other people's kids) going to?

We don't need a bunch of new packs of well-meaning hippies who think that they're pretty good at handling bad trips and who would really like to get some free festival tickets, though. What we

See if you can help them work through their process a little bit if they seem to want company. Sometimes you can really help turn it around for somebody and the worst kind of bummer can be



need is for festivals to care enough so that there's support for more core teams of trained mental health professionals and experienced psychonauts who really do know what to do when it gets crazy out. We need people with extraordinary empathy, profound patience, unshakeable compassion, preternatural insight and composure, and their own fully portable installation. That last one is the most important! You don't want to have to count on the festival for your set up. For one thing, some festivals suck at coming through with all of the resources that they promise. We want to make it as easy as possible for them to just plug us right in.

If you're just somebody who is awesome at tripsitting, then I encourage you to do what I usually do at big festivals, which is simply to keep your eye out for people who may be having a little bit of trouble. Gently ask them if they're alright, and if there's anything at all that you can do for them. Assist them to the bathroom. Get them some water.

transformed into untranslatable bliss. Heck, sometimes people just need to tell somebody all about how beautiful and intense what is happening to them is. I've seen it over and over again. They just need somebody to witness it. Psychedelic experiences can be life changing. It's an incredible honor to get to be the person who sits through that kind of a long bright night of the soul with a fellow human being who is just starting to open up.

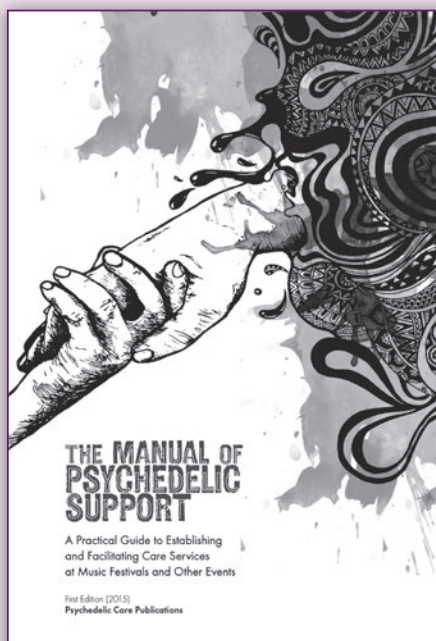
It's vitally important work. It really can help turn a breakdown into a breakthrough. So if you've got that sort of a calling, then why not educate yourself as thoroughly as possible, and then start thinking of yourself as a roving psychedelic support volunteer. I'm very much looking forward to the time when we can count on the availability of experienced and compassionate care services, but it's obvious that we haven't quite gotten there yet. We have to learn how to take care of each other: because that's what communities do. ●

The Manual of PSYCHEDELIC SUPPORT

Review by David Bey

Since the beginning of the 20th century psychedelic era, the informed psychoactive drug-using subculture has followed divergent paths. It was the dream of Albert Hofmann, creator of LSD, that these compounds be regarded as sacred medicine, administered in meditation centers by trained and knowledgeable guides for the purposes of personal and spiritual development. Once psychedelics hit the mainstream in the 1960s, however, they became the high-octane fuel for a wave of anything-goes ecstatic revelry, leading to a social milieu of acid tests with unmeasured punch-bowl party surprises, fear and loathing in the rock-and-roll parking lots, and dodgy doses at all-night raves.

Since this Dionysian explosion triggered many of the worst fears of the establishment culture, it contributed greatly to the demonization and suppression of psychedelics and the cessation of most legal scientific research with psychedelics in humans. Now, over forty years later—in a period that is regarded as a “psychedelic renaissance”—legal research is making headlines. The mainstream culture is increasingly receptive to the idea of psychedelics as agents of healing and as a legitimate avenue for spiritual exploration. At the same time, festival culture has continued to develop and is on its way to becoming a more



conscious and intentional container for visionary experience than it was at its inception.

It's easy to dismiss the consumption of psychedelics at crowded events as dangerous or irresponsible—the misuse of powerful medicines best employed in a more structured and less chaotic setting. The fact is that every year, across the globe, young and old alike experience some of the most transformative moments of their lives within the context of psychedelics use at large gatherings. And as many participants, from amateur acid-heads to seasoned psychonauts, have observed, sometimes

the most challenging experiences can be the most rewarding.

Festival culture is here to stay. Massive, multi-day events are a normal part of many young adults' lives. While events have become more adept at providing infrastructure for medical emergencies, there remains the need for dedicated spaces, staffed by trained specialists, designed to care for those experiencing psychedelic crisis. It's towards this goal that an extraordinary team of authors and editors offers *The Manual of Psychedelic Support*, a landmark work that will change lives around the world.

The Manual was assembled over nearly five years, with contributions from more than fifty collaborators, and draws on five decades of field research. In the words of one of its authors, it is a “best-practices guide for creating safe and ethical care services for the multitudes of individual who are exploring with consciousness-expanding substances outside of Western medical research paradigms.” Including contributions from writers, artists and photographers such as Alicia Danforth, Annie Oak, Diogo Ruivo, Earth and Fire Erowid, Rick Doblin, Alex and Allyson Grey, Fred Tomaselli, Hoffmann & Venosa, Vibrata, and Jen Zariat, with Zevic Mishor serving as lead editor of the project, the *Manual* is, simply put, a masterpiece of harm reduction. As Earth and Fire Erowid write in their foreword, “This Manual shows

how much the art and engineering of psychedelic support services have evolved...and sets a new high bar for the manner in which these services should be run and what they can accomplish.”

The guide kicks off with a history of the festival movement and of the care service strategies that evolved naturally from its beginning. It traces the development from forebearers such as the Hog Farmers, White Bird, the CALM volunteers of the Rainbow Family and the medics who roamed the parking lots at Grateful Dead concerts, to more recent incarnations such as KosmiCare at the Boom Festival, Burning Man’s Green Dot Rangers, DanceSafe, MAPS’s Zendo Project, and the Full Circle Tea House, to list just a few. *The Manual of Psychedelic*

[...] includes everything one would need to start a new psychedelic care organization from the ground up, or to fine-tune and improve the practices of an established group.

Support goes on to describe and define the ethical parameters and principles of psychedelic care services. It outlines an array of logistical guidelines, covering such topics as interacting with festival administration, legal considerations and preliminary planning. With its voluminous information on the recruitment, training, and coordination of the care service team, the *Manual* emphasizes not only how best to support guests in distress, but also how to ensure the welfare of service providers and facilitators themselves. Helpful suggestions and detailed supply lists are presented for the design,

construction, and administration of on-site care centers. Guidelines are provided for guest intake screening, the use of complementary calming and grounding therapies, and how best to interface with emergency on-site medical teams and law enforcement personnel should situations turn gnarly.

In short, *The Manual of Psychedelic Support* includes everything one would need to start a new psychedelic care organization from the ground up or to fine-tune and improve the practices of an established group. Of particular note is the extent to which it is an open source and open-ended document. Appeals for reader feedback and collaboration are frequent. Space is provided on nearly every page to take notes and record experiences. The *Manual* is entirely a volunteer effort and is available to download for free. Its widespread dissemination is encouraged.

It is heartwarming to contemplate the effect this manual will have on those working in psychedelic care services, improving their ability to both give and receive support in the work they do. Even the way it was created reflects the values expressed within: collaboration, service, non-hierarchical organization, community-wide participation, elder-centric, ancestor-conscious, forward-thinking.... More than just helping people to navigate freak-outs, the *Manual* is about helping to foster a worldwide culture of people committed to “a loving regard for all living things” and the transmission of these values to society as a whole. We do not know how festival culture will evolve in generations to come, but documents like this one will surely play a major role in helping direct that evolution towards a culture of “openness, sanity, and support”, where individuals can safely unfold and explore the extraordinary possibilities that lie within themselves. ●

A Global Rite of Passage

BY EARTH & FIRE EROWID

We were honored to write a foreword for *The Manual of Psychedelic Support*. The topic of how to manage psychoactive-related crises is near and dear to our hearts as well as a core part of Erowid’s mission.

For nearly two decades, we’ve collaborated on projects to improve people’s experiences with psychoactive drugs. We believe strongly in both harm-reduction and benefit enhancement, and the *Manual* is a valuable tool for approaching these goals.

Concerts, electronic dance music parties, and festivals offer rich aesthetic and social environments that some people choose to explore with psychoactive drugs. Those who take ecstasy, LSD, cannabis, or other drugs at these events are hoping to have a fun time with a sense of

58%

of festival goers reported having used a psychedelic at an event

connection, interest, and wonder. But a combination of factors—inexperienced users, novel substances, festival chaos, contaminated or misidentified drugs, et cetera—can create a context where some participants have psychologically difficult or physically dangerous experiences.

In March 2015, we surveyed visitors to the Erowid website, asking whether they’d ever been to a large, multi-day, outdoor festival (LMOF) with more than 1,000 attendees and to what extent they had used psychoactives at these events. With 5,030 responses, 66% reported they’d attended at least one LMOF, with 47% having been to more than one. Of festivalgoers, 85% have used cannabis, 60% have used “Ecstasy, Molly, MDMA or an empathogen”, and 58% reported having used “LSD, Mushrooms, or another psychedelic” at such an event. ●

On Kratom...

AFTER 15 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL AVAILABILITY

by Earth & Fire Erowid

Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) is a plant native to Southeast Asia that made its way into the US ethnobotanical market around the year 2000 and began showing up in headshops around 2005. Erowid launched its Kratom Vault in August 1999 and published an introductory article in May 2000. In 2007, the first medical journal article about its use in the United States was published. Mainstream media attention in the late 2000s triggered legislative efforts to ban kratom in a number of US states.

In recent years, we've been asked to write, co-author, and edit several related articles, including a chapter for a 2014 pharmacology textbook titled *Kratom and Other Mytragynines: The Chemistry and Pharmacology of Opioids from a Non-Opium Source*. For that chapter, we did an informal analysis of more than 700 kratom experience reports and produced a thirty-page piece description of "The Kratom

Experience from Firsthand Reports", outlining the types of effects people experience and the reasons why they use kratom.

We're currently working with researchers on a more systematic analysis of Erowid's kratom experience reports. This project categorizes sentences in Erowid-published kratom reports by theme. Themes are iteratively honed and a short set of "theme codes" developed. Independent readers then validate the theme codes, making sure that each text communicates its identified themes. Largely, this analysis has reinforced the existing experiential literature and Erowid's effects lists and descriptions.

Below is our best current understanding of kratom's use outside of traditional settings, including its dosages and effects, as well as a short retrospective of one person's experiences and a report of an unusual side-effect.

Using hundreds of first-hand kratom reports, we can document and distill out the reasons why people use kratom, the routes and methods of self administration, the range of doses used, how dose relates to subjective effects, the range of effects, and what doses or substance combinations are most likely to lead to health problems.

Of the 798 experience reports about *Mitragyna speciosa* and kratom products that were submitted to Erowid before March 20, 2015, 234 have been accepted by our review team and published. Among submitted reports, 91% were written by men and 9% by women (when author gender was specified). The

earliest reports in our collection describe experiences from 2000, which marks the beginning of commercial mail-order availability of kratom in North America, Australia, and Europe.

In 2000, kratom products were generally whole or crushed dried leaf. Based on experience reports and Erowid's vendor monitoring, leaf extracts and extract-enhanced leaf first became available in 2002 and were widely available by 2004. Interest in kratom information grew slowly but steadily during the subsequent decade. In 2004, the Kratom Vault was the 50th most visited substance index on Erowid.org. By early 2014, it had risen to 8th place, but has recently dropped to 15th.

Kratom Use Overview

Generally, in North America, the dried leaves of *M. speciosa* are taken as a bitter tea, loose-leaf powder, or in capsules. Kratom users commonly describe paradoxically stimulating and sedating effects that are most often likened to the effects of opioids such as codeine or oxycodone. It is used recreationally, as an analgesic, as a self-treatment for opioid withdrawal symptoms, and less commonly as a method for interrupting another addiction (e.g. cigarette or benzodiazepine dependence). Reports from Southeast Asia include significantly more descriptions of chewed (buccal) whole leaves used as a daytime

work drug, taken for the purpose of relieving boredom and the discomfort of manual labor. Kratom is considered addictive; reports of physical and psychological dependence, tolerance, and physical withdrawal symptoms are common, though not universal, in experience reports.

Kratom Dosage


The amount of kratom leaf or leaf powder used per dose varies from one gram to fifty grams. Because kratom is a natural plant product and the commercial products are unregulated, potencies can vary dramatically from one capsule, Mylar package, or bag of leaf powder to another. Many commercial kratom products in 2015 include kratom leaf extract redeposited on crushed or powdered leaf, making them more potent than untreated kratom leaves. Tinctures, resins, and straight extracts (not deposited on leaf) are also sold. Dosage of these products varies depending on the concentration of *M. speciosa* alkaloids present in the source material.

Retail kratom products available to the general public range from the low potency “commercial grade” crushed

leaf, to “premium”, “super premium”, “enhanced”, and “super enhanced” leaf. Extracts are usually labeled as “5x”, “15x”, or similar, putatively indicating relative strengths. These, plus additional terms such as “Maeng Da” (aka “Pimp Grade”), plant

Most kratom used in North America is ingested orally, with a few reports of buccal, smoked, or (more rarely) rectal administration. Many kratom users take repeated doses in a single session/day, often redosing between one to three hours after the previous dose. A day

Oral Kratom — Dried Leaf Dosages

	Commercial Grade	Premium	Super Premium	Extract-Enhanced
Threshold	3–7 g	2–4 g	1–2 g	1 g
Light	5–10 g	3–5 g	2–4 g	1–2 g
Common	10–20 g	4–10 g	3–5 g	2–3 g
Strong	20–50 g	8–15 g	4–8 g	3–6 g

provenance such as “Indonesian”, and other vendor-supplied details are used in wine tasting–style comparisons of the quality and potency of products. Although some ethnobotanical vendors reliably differentiate weaker from more potent kratom preparations using these terms, other vendors use them as marketing jargon regardless of product potency.

or session of kratom use might involve up to eight doses (see table), though typical usage involves between one and three per day. The dosage estimates above are for single oral administrations in non-habituated users.

Duration

Kratom teas and extracts, when taken orally on an empty stomach, usually begin to take effect within 15 minutes. On the other end of the spectrum, the effects of capsules swallowed on a full stomach can be delayed 1–3 hours. The primary stimulating phase lasts 1–2 hours, with the more sedating effects lasting another 1–3 hours, for a total duration of 2–5 hours for a single oral dose. Higher doses result in longer durations.

Users report lingering after-effects lasting several hours before they feel “down” from the experience. Some kratom users report alcohol-like hangovers following moderate or strong doses. Taking kratom daily can result in tolerance and eventually physical dependence. In such instances, symptoms described as similar to those of opioid withdrawal usually begin 18–24 hours after the last dose and continue for 1–14 days.



VR + Kratom ⇒ SIM SICKNESS

by RevMeO

Three hours after swallowing six grams of encapsulated kratom leaf, I began a 3D virtual reality (VR) combat helicopter training mission using the DK1 version of the Oculus Rift head-mounted display. Almost immediately, the shifts in my visual field corresponding to sharp turns precipitated slight vertigo-like disturbances. The craft seemed to rotate faster than I'd previously experienced when playing sans kratom.

While maneuvering the helicopter in the virtual skies, I could feel the symptoms increasing. Surprisingly, the unease didn't seem to reduce my



performance. I was so immersed in the game that I didn't think of ripping the gear off my head to get my feet back on "solid ground".

But 15 minutes later, I realized the time had come to remove the headphones and headset and get back to baseline—at least a kratomed baseline. I sat, unmoving, for a short while before walking into the bedroom (swaying a bit along the way) to explain the symptoms to my wife.

I'd previously experienced a mild form of "sim sickness"—think motion sickness but induced by illusory movement—and I was familiar with the nausea and vomiting that can accompany kratom. Fast movements, such as those I was

pulling in the helicopter, are known to trigger sim sickness in some people, though I had never experienced it myself with this particular game. The dose and variety of kratom I'd consumed was well within my safe limits, and wouldn't normally cause any side effects. However, the symptoms from the combination of kratom and VR weren't quite like those produced by either one alone.

As I stood speaking to my wife, I had the sensation of spinning or twisting, though I wouldn't characterize it as dizziness. It felt like there was a semi-solid mass in my head, yet I had no headache.

Looking down on the bed, I felt compelled to collapse face-first onto its softness. It was a novel and strange desire for me, and it felt good when I did it. Yet once on that puffy duvet, I realized my urge wasn't satiated. Standing up, it again felt as though the best thing for getting past this quasi-vertigo would be a face-plant on the bed. That brief moment of falling was splendid; the blissful seconds after landing, equally soothing. Then the discomfort returned along with the need to do it again.

I wasn't stoned out of my gourd on kratom—even if I had been, such behavior would strike me as especially odd. The 2–3 hours I was awake after removing the headgear were punctuated by moments of nausea, and I continued to feel more altered than normal, although the sensation did wane.

The next morning I woke with a minor mental hangover; I didn't feel physically ill, but I didn't feel in balance either, and my thoughts weren't as sharp as they'd be on a normal post-kratom morning.

In hindsight, it wasn't the brightest idea to combine an evolving technology known to induce motion-sickness with a plant linked to similar physical responses. So, for those who use kratom, be warned that it might exacerbate other motion sickness-inducing activities. ○

Effects

The most commonly reported kratom effects range from euphoric stimulation to sleepy dream-like reverie, and from pedestrian caffeine- or alcohol-like intoxication to overwhelming nausea and vertigo. The character of the experience changes as dose increases, beginning with a light relaxing stimulation at low doses and becoming a strong, nodding sedation at high doses. Euphoria and moderate intoxication are characteristic of the mid-dose range.

2015 and Beyond

Kratom is one of those psychoactives that occupies a curious position as a traditional plant medicine with real potential for pharmaceutical development, naturopathic healing, and addiction management uses. It parallels cannabis or khat in the global apothecary, along with attendant complexities of an extended ethnobotanical history, cultural expectations, and social resistance to allowing another natural intoxicant to creep into widespread use.

Vendors contacted by Erowid between 2013 and 2015 described ceasing kratom sales because of concerns about federal and state law enforcement, news coverage, and legislative threats. Some vendors stopped listing the products (but continued to sell them privately) to avoid attention, while most have stopped selling kratom completely.

Kratom's opioid-like analgesia and the possibility that it might be less likely to lead to problematic addiction make it a potentially important plant medication. But, as far as establishment medicine goes, it faces the same challenge as opioids: it is kind of fun for many users. Two years ago, kratom seemed headed for quick bans across the United States, but it has gained some support from medical research communities and has so far stayed out of the federal Schedules. Kratom pokes yet another hole in the poorly-conceived US Controlled Substances Act and UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances: There must be a place for natural plant products with real medicinal value outside of the black market. ○

Positive/Desired Kratom Effects

Simultaneous stimulation and relaxation

Stimulant effects occur earlier and at lower doses, with sedative effects kicking in later and at higher doses. A paradoxical feeling of being both stimulated and sedated at the same time is very common.

Euphoria

Improvements in mood, ranging from mild to gushing euphoria, are common.

Sociability and empathy

Reduced social inhibitions, increased talkativeness, and a sense of enjoying connecting with others are very common.

A lasting “glow”

In contrast to hangover, some users report feeling better than normal the day following lower-dose kratom use.

Reduction of opioid withdrawal symptoms

Widely used by opioid addicts to mitigate opioid withdrawal symptoms. Sometimes used to wean off, sometimes used as a replacement therapy.

Amelioration of physical labor

Increased physical ease and a reduction in discomfort and boredom during manual labor are described among Southeast Asian field workers and in online reports.

Pro-sexual, aphrodisiac qualities

Some report mildly increased sexuality, eroticism, and prolonged intercourse.

Sleepiness

At higher doses and as time passes, kratom can induce sedation, “nodding”, and sleepiness.

Analgesia

Reduction of pain (antinociception), often compared to pharmaceutical opioids, with some saying they prefer the pain relief from kratom.

“Nodding”, vivid dreams

At higher doses, opioid-like “nodding” that can include dream imagery; kratom before bed can induce an increase in dreaming.

Neutral Kratom Effects

Pupil pinning/miosis

As with most *mu*-opioid agonist drugs, pupils decrease in size and responsiveness as a function of dose.

Change in ability to focus eyes

People report unexpected shifts in focal ranges, speed, and precision.



Negative/Unwanted Kratom Effects

Difficulty consuming as tea

Kratom's bitter, grassy taste and resistance to colloidal suspension can make it unpleasant to consume for novices.

Itchiness / pruritus

Itchiness similar to that experienced from opioids is common, with a small number of reports describing pruritus continuing for days after last use.

Mild depression during or after

Although uncommon, some report dysphoria or depressed mood either during or in the days following use.

Tolerance

The same dose of kratom diminishes in effectiveness over consecutive days of use.

Perceived increase in body temperature

Some report feeling hot and sweaty while effects start, at the peak, and/or while coming down.

Reduced sexual desire or performance

Some users describe decreased sexual desire, interest, and performance.

Dizziness, nausea, and vomiting

At higher doses or when used in combination with alcohol, benzodiazepines, or opioids; nausea, vertigo, and vomiting are common.

Hangover similar to alcohol

Next-day and hangover effects range from feeling better than normal, to mild alcohol-type hangovers, to more serious nausea and dysphoria.

Desire to repeat use more often than intended

Some users report thinking about taking kratom and desiring to take kratom more often than they would choose to.

Addiction, difficulty controlling use, and withdrawal symptoms

As with other opioid-agonist drugs, kratom use leads to tolerance, desire to redose, and withdrawal effects after daily use.

Liver health problems

Inflammation of the liver (hepatitis) and symptoms of hepatotoxicity are described in a small number of cases, though it is unknown whether these are due to kratom itself or product contaminants.

Fundamentals of Responsible Psychoactive Use

11

Begin with a low dose until individual reactions are known and thereafter use the **minimum dose necessary** to achieve the desired effects: lower doses are safer doses.

Erowid.org/fundamentals

Take Less. Erowid encourages people to try lowering the dose of psychoactives they use. Not to make people have less fun, or to reduce benefits, or to reduce pleasure, but because less is often just as good as more, and it's almost always safer.

Drug geeks should consider using less than they think is the minimum they enjoy, and work to actively find low doses as satisfying, as fun, as therapeutic, as engaging, and as beneficial as the higher dose they might otherwise be inclined to take.

In Praise of Kratom Leaf

by Fer

For the last year and a half or so, I've gone on fairly regular kratom jags. When I'm enjoying kratom, I take it 2–3 times a day in raw powder form, washed down with juice. I've learned to be careful not to breathe in the powder! If I do, it sticks in my throat for hours, like an awful-tasting post-nasal drip. I mete out my dosage pretty loosely, just a regular household teaspoon, maybe level or maybe rounded, if not quite heaping. Since you're all good drug geeks, I actually measured for the sake of this article. It seems I take between 2 and 2.5 grams at a time, an amount Erowid calls a light dose.

My daily kratom usage generally lasts a couple of weeks, maybe three.

I never increase the dosage.

Over the course of a few weeks, a teaspoonful ceases to be sufficient (the effects are much lighter) and I stop using it. Then I kind of forget about it for another month or two—maybe more, maybe less; there's no rhythm to it—and then I remember, "Mmmm! Kratom!".

As for effect, kratom adds a pleasant but not super pushy layer of alternating euphoria, trippiness, and work motivation to my mood. I can easily forget it's in my system, and then I'll realize I've been working intently for a long time...or the light through a leafless tree canopy will undulate slightly...or the moment of appreciating the light will provide me a wave of deep aesthetic pleasure beyond normal sensation.

I've shared kratom with a few friends. Some appreciate the effects as fully as I do. For others, it's too subtle to even be noticed.

Most kratom is sourced from Thailand, Indonesia, or Malaysia. Some vendors and information sources further distinguish strains by the leaf vein coloration: red, green, or white.

However, there are dozens of different varieties from each country or of each vein, often identified by purported regional names (Bali, Borneo, etc.). Vein color is said to be associated with more or less stimulation, sedation, or pain killing effects, but since all of the leaf powders are visually indistinguishable once processed, it's hard to tell what's real and what's marketing hype. The kratom available online or in your local herb store might not name a region or strain, but may instead have a fancy brand name, like "Velvet Worm" or "Durga Fusion".

Kratom adds a pleasant, but not super pushy layer of alternating euphoria, trippiness, and work motivation to my mood.

For those experimenting with kratom, it's important to know that some types are more stimulating and others are more euphoric. I don't pay much attention to the exotic brands and strain names and just use powdered, non-enhanced leaf. Personally, I have a preference for the more euphoric varieties, which have a stronger pain-killer/opiate-like effect (supposedly due to higher mitragynine content). But I sometimes use a more stimulating type when I have writing to get done.

Besides being pleasant simply for its own sake, kratom has a good reputation as both an antidepressant and mood regulator and also as a means of mitigating opiate withdrawal. Given my experience of effects, it's



easy to believe the stories of people switching from opiates to kratom for pain management.

Exaggerated Addictiveness?

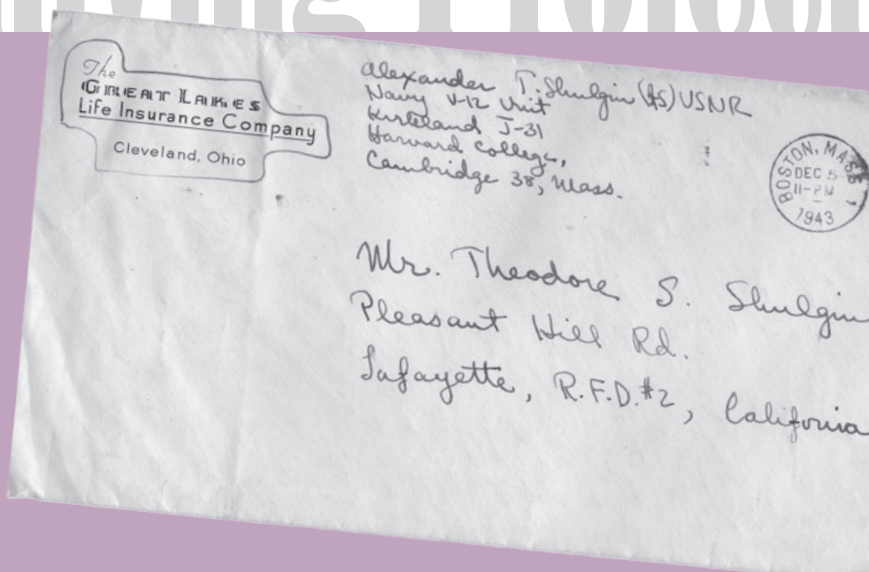
Reports also often claim that kratom is addictive. This has not been my experience. In my year and a half of on-and-off usage, I have not yet experienced either hangover or withdrawal. The reason I was motivated to write about kratom is that I felt that the dependence, withdrawal, and addiction sometimes attributed to it are exaggerated. Some of the articles and summaries published by Erowid seem to overstate the problem, given my experience and those of my friends. The friend who first gave me kratom, whose plant knowledge is world class, agrees that addictiveness is sometimes overstated. Of course, we are both mindful users; it may well be that increasing dosage when effects taper off leads to different results. It's also possible that people react differently enough that they experience a withdrawal that neither I nor my expert friend do.

At the dose I take, *Mitragyna speciosa* will not blow off your doors of perception, but it may enhance your day. Perhaps the biggest problem with kratom is that its popularity has led to increasingly over-the-top marketing hype and ridiculous product names, all of which overshadow its natural qualities. Finding a good, reliable organic powdered kratom leaf can be trickier than in past years. But if you and leaf get along, say hi from Fer. ○

Shulgin Archiving Project

The Shulgin Archiving Project is a collaborative project that has been in the works for more than a decade. Erowid's involvement began with friendly needling of Sasha to allow digitization of his chemistry notebooks and files. Team Shulgin had the first of his lab books scanned in 2007. In 2008, Erowid began building an online "Shulgin Collection" and started helping with fundraising.

Since Sasha's death, the project has begun transforming from its humble beginnings into something more organized and directed. There are currently over a dozen people involved in document discovery, organization, identification, and scanning. Ann wields final say on the project, along with her daughter Wendy, who leads the Shulgin's publishing imprint, Transform Press. Tania and Greg Manning act as ringleaders for the expanding team, who have collectively put in thousands of hours. We're working with Team Shulgin to make more of the Shulgin Collection available and we hope you enjoy this tiny glimpse into the archives.



A Dispatch from the Shulgin Farm...

by Scott Bodarky

I first started paying regular visits to the Farm in order to play *Go* with Sasha. A few years ago, I began helping Team Shulgin with publishing and lending my entrepreneurial skills towards establishing the Alexander Shulgin Research Institute (ASRI).

I've passed many hours at the Farm working on this Archiving Project. Each week I spend several hours sorting through materials accumulated over the last 110 years by

**EROWID IS DEDICATING \$8,276.59
(10% OF OUR REDDIT CHARITY GIVE-
AWAY WIN) TO SHULGIN ARCHIVING.**

Sasha, Ann, and their families. Sasha's only child, Ted, predeceased him by several years. So with Sasha's passing, his direct genetic line ended.

All of the accumulated papers and mementos from Sasha, Ted, Sasha's parents, his ancestors, and his first wife Nina and her family are here. It appears that neither Sasha nor anyone around him ever threw anything away!

It feels odd to paw through the relics and residue of people's existence, from birth to death. The evanescence of life is apparent; decades of daily living reduce to boxes of mouldering papers and ephemera, which will give way to dust in the end.

Now we're sifting for treasures hidden among mundane artifacts such as magazine expiration notices, cancelled checks, and bank statements going back to the 1930s. There is much of interest, including 16 mm films, audio cassettes, Sasha's writings, his music, his well-organized filing cabinets, his correspondence, and family photos.

The collection contains meaningful finds such as diaries written by Sasha's mother during his infancy and his letter home from college, in which he proposes changing his major from pre-med to organic chemistry. There are also fun curiosities, like Sasha's ham radio handbook, his notes to solve the Rubik's Cube, his original poems beginning when he was ten years old, and the poetry magazines that published them.

I'm not sure what will be of most interest to Erowid readers or the future of humanity, but we continue to dig. ○



Sasha and his father (above). Sasha as an infant in his parents' arms (below). Letter home about changing his major to chemistry in 1943 (right and left).

BUY
WAR SAVINGS
BONDS AND STAMPS



Kirkland J-31
Cambridge 38, Mass

UNITED STATES NAVY

Dear dad: -

In a couple of days, I will go into see Lieut. Hodgett, about the possibilities of getting an extended leave this Christmas. The normal leave is from the 22nd to the 25th of December, but if I can get a few extra days, I will be able to come home for X-mas, which I hope will be possible.

I would also like to ask your opinion on a presently pressing problem - also ask mother about it. This is it - what do you think of my transferring out of pre-med into organic chemistry, as a major. It would mean that I wouldn't go to medical school, but I don't believe that I could maintain sufficient interest in doctoring and medicine to stick it out through 3 or 4 years of school somewhere. As a chem major, I would not have as long at schooling, but I would be studying something in which I was and am interested. Also, I might be able to get my degree here or at some other college. I believe that I can change my major easily enough, as at present there is an excess of pre-med students, more than the med-schools will be able to accommodate. As a chem major I would come out a line officer, rather than

a medical officer, but this makes no difference to me.

Please write and tell me how you feel on the matter, and mother too.

It is now 8:30 so will have to dash up to the labs, so will mail this as I go.

love to you and mother
Sasha.

by Talus

The Customs of a Coca CONNOISSEUR

Coca leaf powder is my favorite stimulant; I've been using it for about five years. It's quite easy to order online from Peru. By pre-mixing the powder with baking soda and slipping a spoonful between my cheek and gum, I have a modern version of the traditional coca leaf quid used in many parts of the Andes. Benefits of this method are its easily titrated short duration (I can remove the quid an hour before bedtime and be able to sleep) and its smooth, energizing effect. I use coca to reduce fatigue, boost energy while backpacking and combat altitude

It hadn't really occurred to me that a package stopped at a shipping facility might be linked to a Customs search when returning to my country.

sickness while mountaineering, as well as to reduce hangovers and enhance studying. I am particularly fond of mixing gabapentin and coca, a favored combination for doing physical work and house chores.

It has always astonished me that it is so easy to order. I've also been puzzled that more of my friends don't use coca powder, or that they aren't aware of its availability and utility. I have primarily purchased the powdered leaf from a vendor that bills it as "Inca Tea". I have consumed about 500 grams a year and have not encountered any difficulties

with supply. That came to an end about a year ago.

With one order, there was a note from the vendor boasting that they had a new option to ship orders using DHL. Previously, the only option had been EMS, a trusty but much slower and less accounted-for international shipper. Delighted to be able to make use of more modern systems, I chose to pay an extra fee for DHL service, thinking I could expect faster shipping and track my package with fewer hassles. I should have known better.

The package's tracking status progressed from port to port until it was held up at US Customs in Miami, a fact I learned once I contacted the seller, who had greater access to data about the delay. The seller agreed to send a second package free of charge using EMS. Despite being shipped to the same name and address that was on the original DHL package, the EMS parcel arrived without issue.

Several months later, having forgotten about the incident, I found myself in line to clear Customs in Dallas, Texas during a return flight from a vacation in Mexico. The officer reviewing my electronic receipt from the kiosk I'd lackadaisically checked in to at Immigrations flagged me to have my luggage dumped and searched. My partner and I were in danger of missing our connecting flight, but we decided it would be better if we stuck together.

I was pretty freaked out—I carry a small assortment of unlabeled pills and medications wherever I go, some of which are controlled—and after a carefree week of relaxation I was

struggling to contain my distaste for the plodding inelegance of "the system". While waiting in line, we observed a young man with blonde dreadlocks who had been just a few folks ahead of us getting escorted into a separate room, only to emerge later in handcuffs with a dejected look on his face. It was hard not to feel contempt for these agents of control.

My partner reminded me to stay calm and respectful. When we were finally summoned forward, the official ordered us to bring our luggage to the long stainless steel table where he scattered our belongings.

I didn't expect to feel so violated. The search kicked off when I was greeted with "Hello Mr. Lastname, you wouldn't be bringing any more coca into the country, would you?" (My spouse was horrified when she heard this.) It hadn't really occurred to me that a package stopped at a shipping facility might be linked to a Customs search when returning to my country.

The officer proceeded to rummage through our belongings in a deliberate, relaxed manner, starting with my wife's bag. He explained without looking up that we had landed at a bad time to go through Customs, as we were arriving during a shift change when fewer agents were available and some were occupied with the young man's arrest, causing a delay in searches.

As he picked through packed souvenirs, presents, and my wife's underwear, he casually asked us pointed questions requiring precise, prompt answers. Most unsettlingly, he would pause to examine the quality of our eye

Acullico Adapted

The wad of coca leaf for chewing is known as an *acullico* in the Andes, from the Quechua *akhulliku*. Making and using a coca quid for buccal administration is easy. My method uses powdered coca leaf and my local source of alkalizing admixture: baking soda.

Put one cup of coca powder and one teaspoon of baking soda in a jar. Screw on lid and shake. When the fine dust settles, slide a small teaspoonful (about two grams) between cheek and gum. Compact with the fingers against the outside cheek to form a quid. Leave it there or turn with the tongue; it will moisten with saliva. The more baking soda I add, the stronger the effects are, but also the more saliva that is produced, meaning the quid turns runny and dissolves more quickly.

It is fine to swallow the liquid; I always do. If the quid is too dry, or if I don't notice subtle effects in the first 15 minutes, I add more baking soda to my source jar. It should have a salty taste but not be so strong that it irritates the gums. A good quid can last between 30 and 90 minutes before it disappears. The effects quickly dissipate and I am fully back to baseline in 45 minutes.

The effect of coca is cumulative; if I use the right ratio and properly manage quids throughout the day the effects build and approximate the plateau of a moderate dose of insufflated cocaine, only with less euphoria and more focus. Because of the slow onset, there is no rush or crash. Compared to caffeine, I experience much less "body load". I don't get jitters, irritability, or an acid stomach (though, as with coffee, there can be a laxative effect). Coca is fine on an empty stomach (it actually helps me when I am hungry and on the trail), and because of its shorter duration, I can use it in the evening and still expect a good night's sleep. I haven't noticed tolerance, hangover, or any kind of withdrawal symptoms when I go without. I'm uncertain about the effects of the baking soda on my system, but I do know coca is nutritious and gives me an incredible edge over my mountaineering group when climbing, especially at altitude. ○



contact and facial expressions. It was clear he was well practiced in focusing a suspicious eye on people to assess threats and dissimulation. Moreover, he seemed to be trying to determine whether we were the type to oppose authority or creatively relate to the law. Having my wife by my side was advantageous: with her I passed more easily as a settled "family man", another stable, tax-paying and law-abiding, harmless cog.

Soon, the official switched to a much more personable self-presentation. I thought he was trying to disarm me into saying something incriminating, but in the end, I think he was breaking character and allowing us to see him as an ordinary guy doing his job. He delivered a mini-lecture on not ordering coca tea online, because of, you know, its association with its naughty cousin. We dutifully nodded and acted dumb and grateful for the tip. In a fascinating turn, as he examined my wife's carefully labeled baggies of over-the-counter and prescribed medication (my wife peels her prescription labels off and sticks them on little bags in the interest of space-saving), he helpfully recommended that we always travel with actual prescription bottles in order to avoid hassles if we should undergo a future search. He also

explained that even though we'd bought our bottles of tequila in duty free in Mexico, we would not be allowed to keep them in our carry-ons! We hastily repacked our bags right there at the search table. (Thanks, Customs Guy!)

After deciding that we were "good people", and chatting about the housing markets of his hometown and ours, he said we could repack my wife's bag and move on—without even searching my bag! We managed to make our flight, but we were shaken. It was a reminder of how so many elements of my lifestyle that I take for granted as self-evident human rights are conceived of as being illegal; a threat to the common good. Especially disturbing is that coca, a sacred plant central to Andean culture for thousands of years, was taken out of its native context by this same western society, concentrated into powder cocaine, and vilified by inextricably linking it with criminality and violence.

Perhaps the most practical lesson: I got pulled out of a line of hundreds of passengers because a product I ordered through the mail had been confiscated by Customs a year earlier. I'm so ready for more intelligent, or at least less stupid, public policy. ○

The Distillation

Organizational updates, statistics, and information about Erowid Center's ongoing projects

EROWID CONTENT

DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED ON EROWID.ORG

64,493

Experience Reports	24,040
Articles & Information Pages	18,628
References	8,339
Photographs & Images	7,873
Archived Site Pages	4,701
Visionary Art	2,021
"Ask Erowid" Answers	600
The Erowid Review	312



TECH SPECS

Erowid Files on Server	159,755
Erowid Disk Footprint	80.6 GB
Average Response Time	341 ms



PLANTS AND DRUGS

NUMBER OF SUBSTANCES WITH THEIR OWN VAULT

359

MOST ACCESSED SUBSTANCES (W/ CHANGE)

1) LSD (↔)	11) Ayahuasca (↓)
2) MDMA (↔)	12) Heroin (↑)
3) Mushrooms (↔)	13) Salvia divinorum (↓)
4) DMT (↔)	14) Alprazolam (↑)
5) Cannabis (↔)	15) Kratom (↑)
6) Ketamine (↔)	16) Morning Glory (↑)
7) Meth (↑)	17) DXM (↔)
8) Cocaine (↓)	18) Psych. Amanitas (↑)
9) 2C-B (↔)	19) Mescaline (↑)
10) Oxycodone (↔)	20) Amphetamines (↔)

SUBSTANCES WITH PUBLISHED EXPERIENCES

593



EXPERIENCE REPORTS

Published Reports	24,040
Fully Triaged Reports	38,732
Partially Triaged Reports	1,032
Un-triaged Reports	19,249
Rejected Reports	22,825

EXPERIENCE REPORTS COLLECTED

105,878

Submitted Each Day	7
Published in the Last Year	100
Active Triagers/Reviewers	24



SOCIAL MEDIA

@Erowid Followers	26,162
Avg Tweets Per Day	6.1
GreatNonprofits Reviews	888



EROWID SITE STATISTICS

UNIQUE ADDRESSES VISITING EROWID/ECSTASYDATA YEARLY

16,988,168

Avg Viewers Per Day	97,079
Avg Page Hits Per Day	264,123
Avg File Hits Per Day	3,028,510
Daily Transfer	30.94 GB



RANDOM STATS!

AVERAGE AGE OF @EROWID TWITTER FOLLOWERS

25.9

MOST ACCESSED DOCUMENTS (LAST 3 MONTHS)

Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide
Drug Testing Basics
Rhodium Archive: Complete MDMA Synthesis

Refactoring Erowid's Guts

Over the past six months, JL, Earth, and Fire have focused a lot of time on what is known by programmers as "refactoring", a process of improving the code underlying a system without changing its external behavior. Erowid.org and EcstasyData have undergone many changes that are invisible to visitors. We've been updating software, removing unused code, and bringing relevant code up to date. Refactoring is a step towards improving the sites' performance, making them more mobile device-friendly, and more compliant with new browsers.

But, it hasn't all been just refactoring. We've also been working on small visible improvements such as updates to fonts, text spacing, regularization of background colors, a consolidation of footer styles, and an updated look for the navigational interface. While these changes may seem minor from the outside, we have edited ten thousand files in the last few months, all to get the websites ready for even bigger changes to come. Soon, changes you will notice! ○

Psychoactive Photography



PHOTOS & IMAGES

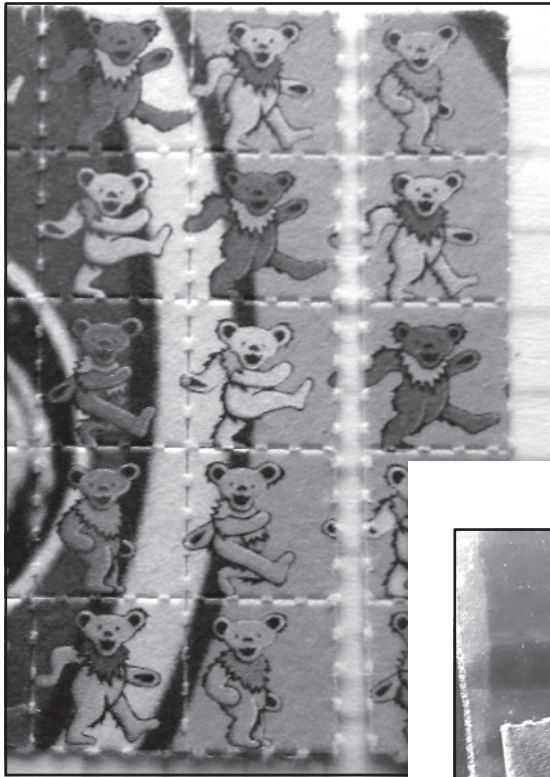
Published Photos & Art	7,873
Image Vaults	309
Viewed Per Day	14,849
Published in Last 6 Months	10
Submitted Each Day	1.0
Awaiting Processing	13,773



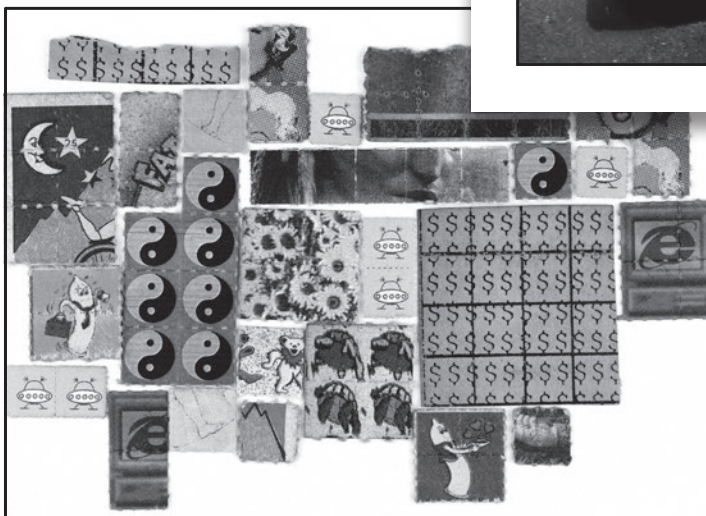
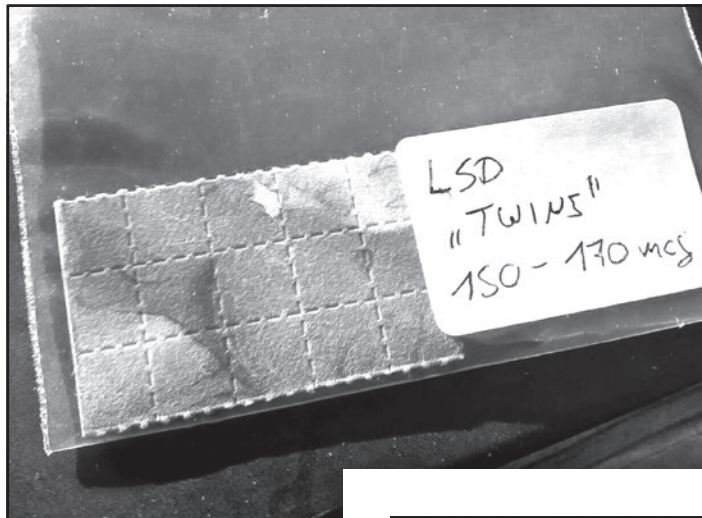
THE EROWID REVIEW

Published Reviews	313
Viewed Each Day	4,417

LSD "Dancing Bears" Blotter, Photo by BalkanBoj



LSD "Twins" Blotter, Photo by Tryptomaniac

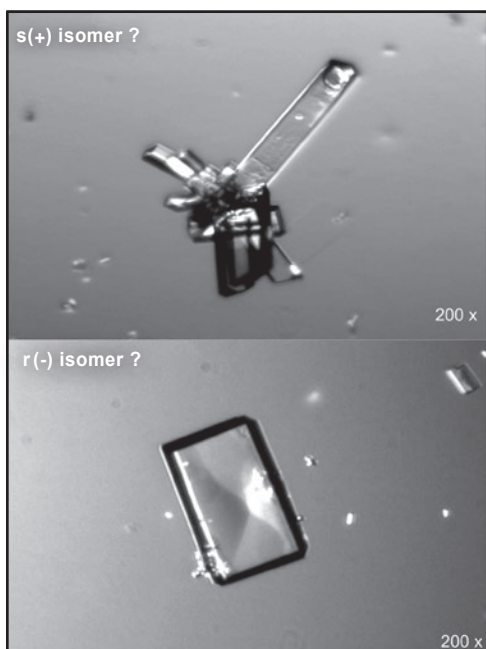


European Blotter Collage, Photo by Farmer Dodds



LSD "Cherubs" Blotter, Photo by Anonymous

Crystalline Forms



Two Ketamine Crystals, Photo by Anonymous



DMT Crystals from *Mimosa hostilis*, Photo by Sebastian Stevens



Extracted Salvinorin Crystals, Photo by Stevek1

Reddit Charity Decimation

Erowid selected to get \$82,765.95!

Reddit.com is a popular, quirky, discussion site that bills itself as “the front page of the Internet”. Reddit stands out from other social media platforms by being geekier, with a text-based Usenet-era aesthetic. Voting is built in to Reddit’s DNA. Discussions on any and every topic, from Christianity to drugs, can be up- or down-voted by registered users.

On Feb 18th, without notice, Reddit announced they were “decimating” their 2014 advertising revenue, giving away 10%, split between ten charities selected by Redditors during a week-long voting period. **The ten winning non-profits would each receive \$82,765.95.**

A couple of Erowid volunteers who are Reddit drug-discussion moderators alerted us to the giveaway. Initially we balked at throwing ourselves into the running because of past experience with similar social media voting. In 2009, Chase Bank held a charity challenge on Facebook in which we believe Erowid Center qualified as a winner. But the win was canceled at the discretion of Chase based on fine print in their “terms”. Understandably, we were hesitant to waste our supporters’ time with another rigged vote (despite efforts by Limonene, Reality, and jhoppa—our excellent Redditor volunteers).

Then, three days into the voting, we made a run for it. The voting system had an awful interface flaw, excluding charities with less than a million dollars in annual revenue from appearing in search results. Supporters had to be told in detail how to vote based on our tax ID.

We spent three and a half days mobilizing members, site visitors, and friends through social media, email, and site messages. In the end, Erowid successfully placed fourth in the list of ten winners! ○

2015 Reddit Charity “Decimation” Winners

1. Electronic Frontier Foundation
2. Planned Parenthood Federation
3. Doctors Without Borders, USA
4. Erowid Center
5. Wikimedia Foundation (Wikipedia)
6. MAPS
7. NPR
8. Free Software Foundation
9. Freedom From Religion Foundation
10. Tor Project Inc.

36-Hour Testing Turnaround

On the final day of the Reddit charity voting challenge, while hectically gathering votes, we received an email from a senior editor at *New York Magazine*. He asked for short-deadline help with an article about ecstasy in the wake of “molly-related” hospitalizations at Wesleyan University the previous weekend. We didn’t have a chance to reply immediately, but he pressed the issue by calling our testing lab (DDL) directly. DDL got in touch with us, and, though we’d slept little for the last few days, we coordinated to have the magazine’s samples shipped to them overnight. The lab technician went out of his way to help, conducting the tests that day and sending us the results late Friday night. We verified the data and sent it to NYMag before bed.

While our normal EcstasyData process time is about a week, we were able to get the analyses completed in less than 36 hours, from ship to finish. Police toxicology labs almost always take weeks or months to release results. As of five weeks after the event, the public still doesn’t know what was in that Wesleyan “molly”. The seven samples from NYMag, while not directly from Wesleyan, showed a variety of substances being sold as “Molly” or “Ecstasy” in New York: MDMA, Ethylone, MDA, and methamphetamine. While EcstasyData can’t normally afford this speedy turnaround, we enjoyed showing off the project’s capabilities even in the middle of one of the biggest fundraising sprints we’d ever managed. ○

Blotter Auction Raises \$5,425

In late 2014, a generous supporter of the Shulgin Archiving Project donated between 60% and 75% of the proceeds from six valuable pieces of signed blotter art auctioned on eBay. Many thanks to Island_Healing for his support of Team Shulgin and Erowid! ○

Seeking Volunteer/Project Manager

For the past two years, the biggest hole in Erowid’s core staff has been the lack of a volunteer manager. Most of the content on Erowid is written, edited, or verified by volunteers, many of them chemists, toxicologist, historians, etc. They have professional lives that take priority over their volunteer work for an educational charity like Erowid, and they need direction and ~~chastise~~ encouragement to contribute to and complete projects.

The unexpected grant from Reddit has opened the door to being able to afford an additional crew member for this critical position. We’ll begin a targeted search for a fitting addition to our team in the next few months and are hopeful that this search will yield world-class expertise in managing remote teams of volunteers in the global, poly-timezone, online reality of the Erowid crew. ○



ECSTASYDATA.ORG PROJECT

PERCENTAGE OF ECSTASY/MOLLY SAMPLES CONTAINING NO MDMA

49%

2015	Avg Page Hits Per Day	13,326
	Avg File Hits Per Day	431,551
	Daily Viewers	5,242
	Year-To-Date Samples Tested	140

2014	Ecstasy/Molly Samples		Results Published	
	MDMA Only	(34%) 86	2010–2014	4,206
MDMA + Something	(16%) 40	2005–2009	434	
+1 Other	29	2000–2004	1,280	
+2 Others	10	1996–1999	102	
+3 Others	1			
Something Else	(49%) 122			
Nothing	(1%) 2			



Yellow UPS

MDMA



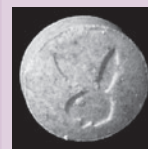
Yellow Rolodex

MDA



Blue Tulip

TFMPP (20)
Lidocaine (1)



Green Playboy

Meth (6)
Caffeine (2.5)
Ethylone (1)



MEMBERSHIP & SUPPORT

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTED \$3 OR MORE IN LAST 13 MONTHS

6,567 2,500 HIGHER THAN PREVIOUS YEAR!

Recently Expired (0–6 months)	488
Older Expired (>6 mo.)	7,068
Members in the United States	1,096 (68%)
Members in Other Countries	504 (32%)
Countries with Erowid Members	43

Countries with the Most Members

USA (1,088); Canada (90); UK (78); Australia (73); Germany (33); Netherlands (23); Sweden (20); France (16); Denmark (15); Switzerland (14); Norway (13); New Zealand (12); Finland (11); Brazil (11); Italy (8); Belgium (7); Ireland (7); Israel (7); Spain (7); Austria (6)

CURRENT MEMBERS

1,612

VERBATIM

“Happiness! Can any human being undertake to define it for another?”

— Dinah Craik (1826–1887)

“The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government.”

— Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

“Reason, Observation, and Experience—the Holy Trinity of Science—have taught us that happiness is the only good; that the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so.”

— Robert G. Ingersoll (1833–1899)

“Happiness in the ordinary sense is not what one needs in life, though one is right to aim at it. The true satisfaction is to come through and see those whom one loves come through.”

— E. M. Forster (1879–1970)

“Happiness lies only in a divine unrest; and if you are lapped in comfort you stagnate and miss it.”

— John Buchan (1875–1940)

“In all human affairs there are efforts, and there are results, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result.”

— James Allen (1864–1912)

“Do not attempt to accomplish greater results by a greater effort of your little understanding, but by a greater understanding of your little effort. The greater your understanding of the power within yourself, the less effort you need to make in order to achieve.”

— Walter Russell (1871–1963)

“Fanaticism consists in redoubling your efforts when you have forgotten your aim.”

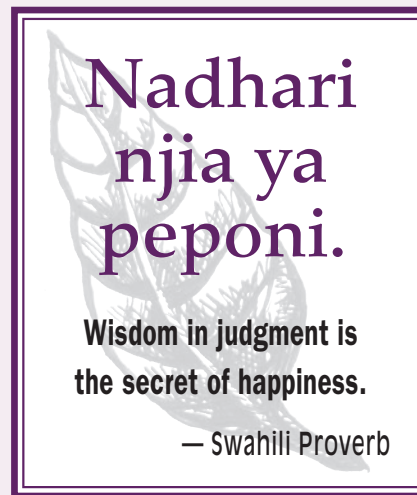
— George Santayana (1863–1952)

“To have striven, to have made the effort, to have been true to certain ideals—this alone is worth the struggle.”

— William Osler (1849–1919)

“You are not controlling the storm, and you are not lost in it. You are the storm.”

— Sam Harris (b. 1967)



“Creative quietude combines within a single individual two seemingly incompatible conditions—supreme activity and supreme relaxation.”

— Huston Smith (b. 1919)

“Acceptance of others, their looks, their behaviors, their beliefs, brings an inner peace and tranquility—instead of anger and resentment.”

— Unknown

“[LSD] is a psychic energizer... It releases the subconscious. It makes you see all your guilts, fears, repressions and insecurities. It makes you free.”

— Cary Grant (1904–1986)

“We must always remember to thank the CIA and the Army for LSD. [...] They invented LSD to control people and what they did was give us freedom.”

— John Lennon (1940–1980)

“No government is ever really in favor of so-called civil rights. It always tries to whittle them down. They are preserved under all governments, insofar as they survive at all, by special classes of fanatics, often highly dubious.”

— H. L. Mencken (1880–1956)

“Enlightenment should also be enjoyable.”

— Saul Bellow (1915–2005)

“If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926)

“It matters not how long we live, but how.”

— Philip James Bailey (1816–1902)

“Life! Don’t talk to me about life!”

— Marvin the Depressed Robot

“Keeping that awestruck vision of the world ready to hand while dealing with the demands of daily living is no easy exercise, but it is definitely worth the effort, for if you can stay centered, and engaged, you will find the hard choices easier, the right words will come to you when you need them, and you will be a better person.”

— Daniel Dennett (b. 1942)

“Better than a thousand hollow words; is one word that brings peace.”

— Buddha (ca. 6th century BCE)

“Peace is liberty in tranquility.”

— Cicero (106 BCE–43 BCE)