

Review of Encarta Reference Library 2002  
By Joan Carroll

I installed Encarta Reference Library over the Encarta Encyclopedia that came with my Dell computer and I seldom used. This version has the deluxe encyclopedias, dictionary and thesaurus, a world atlas, 22 map styles and researcher/fact finder. Also available is online research that is very easy to use. Staples and Best Buy advertised this program for \$39.99 after a \$20 rebate.

The requirements listed are a Pentium 200 MHz but 300 MHz is recommended. My computer is 667 Mhz. Operating systems listed were Windows 98, Professional 2000, ME or Windows XP. You also need at least 64 MB of RAM but 128 MB is better to operate all of its features. 330MB of available hard disk space, quad speed CD-ROM, a Super VGA, 16 bit or higher monitor with 800x600 screen resolution, video and sound cards plus speakers and of course, internet access to use the Encarta Online feature.

I chose minimal installation so I wouldn't take up a lot of hard drive space with the full installation; I need to insert one of four CDs to access all the information but the program gives you a prompt for this. Installation was straight-forward: it seemed to update my system settings while weird notations flew by in the window-at least it updated the Windows Media Player and Outlook Express, Explorer and added an icon for MSN messenger and Encarta Researcher on my toolbar. The researcher makes a direct contact with Encarta Online. I did not see an uninstall feature.

I picked Rhode Island first as I come from Connecticut and liked to visit this state especially Block Island. There followed a comprehensive article on art, government, geography, climate, history of the state's formation and important historical figures, plus a lot of tourist information. I checked the climate for January and July, compared the state's climate to Norfolk, Va., Charleston, S.C. and Miami, Florida and discovered a temperate climate in the winter along the coast but much colder inland.

I explored biking in the state parks and major recreational areas by going online with [www.visitrhodeisland.com/recreation/biking.html](http://www.visitrhodeisland.com/recreation/biking.html) by a direct link. There was an email address for a free guide to Cycling in the Ocean State (R.I.) and a few fast clicks gave me a list of bicycle rental shops, accommodations, and travel info. An event calendar gave up-to-the minute web page with dates of the events plus phone number to call about the event.

Next I looked up knee surgery. The Encarta Researcher option searched Encarta.com and MSN Search. It found an alternative knee surgery with an animated description of the procedure. Other linked sites gave patient information (these sites were from clinics in several states).

There are no manuals but the directions are clear. The help section is easy to use. I called the 800 # for the Encarta Online Deluxe that is a free one-year subscription that according to the person on the line and your Encarta Updates will be available until

October 2002. He said there was no charge, but you needed to have a Passport Account to access the Encarta Online Deluxe. This is also needed for MSN hotmail and other programs offered by Microsoft. Registration for the passport asked for your email address, name and address, also you had to answer a secret question that you chose (you get to pick from preselected questions on a child or adult level). I wonder if my screen will now be filled with annoying ads. So I tried the Encarta Online Deluxe and had a very nice article on Computer graphics. It is definitely student friendly as you can print the whole article or print sections. When I finished reading the article and clicked Encarta Home I had an ad plus another ad when I closed the site. The software program was such an improvement over the Encarta software installed by Dell that I can live with the ads.