

One Hundred Million Images

One hundred million – 100 million – 100,000,000. No matter how you say it, that is a lot of images. These images are searchable on www.pacasearch.com. The number is not what makes searching on the site unique. There are probably as many pictures accessible on Google Images. What's amazing is the fact that all the images are available for licensing because trademark, copyright and release issues have been addressed and sales models have been created.

PACA has brought together over sixty of its major archives to create this formidable collection, including the recognizable standards such as Getty Images and Alamy. The still imagery available includes editorial, commercial, historic, fine art, travel, news, and just about every other important category that any image researcher could need.

PacaSearch is the search system sponsored by PACA, The Picture Archive Council of America. The search aggregates results onto one interface, providing buyers with a convenient single point of access. PACA is the professional trade organization in North America, representing the important interests of many of the best commercial image collections in the world. Fostering good business standards and ethical practices, the organization takes an active role in industry legal developments, and offers copyright education, legal forms, and industry news & events.

The technology is brilliant. It is very easy to use, extremely fast, and comprehensive in offering results. Image buyers are instantly exposed to the greatest variety of member collections, allowing them access to globally diverse imagery that is direct from the source. Buyers enjoy one stop shopping without having to log onto many different sites. And, the search is free. Researchers enjoy the opportunity to easily locate image collections that might otherwise be buried or hard to find.

So, what's unique about the search? To begin with it's pretty standard. The buyer submits a keyword or term in the search box to locate the best choice of image libraries to meet the need. The really cool feature is the two columns of results, offering a list of agency libraries ranked by descending order for the total number of images found. Then, there is a column of libraries ranked by the relative percentage of images in relation to the total collection, implying that these archives offer specialty content.

A good example of this is Huntstock.com. Huntstock specializes in positive lifestyle of people with disabilities. When key wording the word: “disability,” Getty Images results in over 27,000 images. Alamy comes up with over 13,000. These are popular search sites. However, Huntstock, with only about 1000 images, is highly targeted to royalty free disability imagery released for commercial use. It is definitely a specialty content.

The screenshot shows the PACA Search website interface. At the top left is the PACA logo (Picture Archive Council of America). In the center, there is a search bar containing the word "disability", a "Search" button, and a "Previous Searches..." dropdown menu. To the right of the search bar is the PACA SEARCH logo with the tagline "Rapid Licensable Image Search / pacasearch.com". Below the search bar, there are two columns of results:

Ranked by Total Found (top 30 in descending order)		Ranked by Relative Percentage of Collection (may imply specialization)	
Getty Images	27,366	Huntstock	
Alamy	14,003	Education Imagery	
SuperStock	7,128	Phototake	
age fotostock	6,708	Aurora Photos	
maXx images	5,258	Image Source	
Media Bakery	4,395	Rubberball	
Masterfile	4,123	The Image Works	
Veer	3,040	North Wind Picture Archives	
The Image Works	2,894	Pictures From Our Past	

There is an excellent concise and descriptive “how to” video on the site which describes some successful searches of rare content. One example is a photo researcher looking for an “ox sarcophagus,” a mummified animal. Another person needed a howitzer gun crew. Neither subject matter constitutes your average search, and both yielded instant and licensable results.

The screenshot shows the PACA Search interface. At the top left is the PACA logo. In the center, there is a search bar containing the text "ox sarcophagus" and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar is a "Previous Searches..." dropdown menu. Below the search bar, there are two columns of results. The left column is titled "Ranked by Total Found (top 7 in descending order)" and lists: The Image Works (10), Alamy (5), Getty Images (2), maXx images (1), age fotostock (1), The Art Archive (1), and SuperStock (1). The right column is titled "Ranked by Relative Percentage of Collection (may imply specialization)" and lists: The Art Archive, The Image Works, Alamy, SuperStock, maXx images, age fotostock, and Getty Images, each with a horizontal bar chart indicating its relative percentage.

According to Sheri Blaney-Nogg, of SBN Research Photos & Footage, “I found the PACA site helpful, not only for cutting down research time, but in finding new source options, and discovering some of the agencies’ newest collections. When researching a lesser known Uruguayan actress, China Zorilla, I was unable to find her on any of the celebrity sites. However, via pacaSearch, Alamy turned up 26 images of the actress. Would I have thought to go to Alamy for a lesser known celebrity? Probably not.”

Sheri also says, “My work on a psychology textbook led me to the best collection of psychology images, and to my surprise, MaXx has the second largest collection (over 3000 images), an agency I was not familiar with. The PACA search engine saves time in finding the agencies offering the needed images and is amazingly fast. I’d use it!”

The other advantages of this well-built search engine are the drop downs. When typing in an initial fragment of a keyword, a predictive drop down appears with a list of vetted terms to choose from. It helps creatively to see what other terms may fit a description. Best of all, there is a drop down of suggested disambiguations for words that can have a variety of meanings. This is called a homogram – a word spelled one way but having various definitions, such as “trunk.” Is it a car trunk or an elephant trunk? The drop down will allow a researcher to choose. Very few sites offer this aid. Now, via pacaSearch, all of the member sites are connected to this asset.

There is also a keyword expansion system, allowing for more than one way of looking for the same thing. The keyword searches for similar words or phrases. This is particularly useful for scientific terms, where a technical phrase, such as the species, may not be related to a normal animal name. PacaSearch is also very valuable in searching for concepts, such as “sad” or “love,” as the professional member sites are good at attributing concept words to their keywording.

Particularly useful to the researcher who needs to collect catalogs of multiple subject matter, there is a “command click” feature on Mac and a “control click” feature on the PC, which will save multiple catalogs in a background tab. These tabs can be saved and accessed later. The collections can be saved into a single bookmark. Because the bookmark is related to the search term and not the search results, new images will be made available for the catalog.

When the decision is made to license an image, all the terms and pricing are communicated with the member archive of images. Ease of use, speed, trust, reliability, vast in content, technically clever, informative – these are all descriptive words for PACA’s worthwhile and yet-undiscovered golden nugget – www.pacaSearch.com. Try it. You’ll be amazed.

(Pat Hunt is a writer and workshop leader for the stock photo industry, and Managing Director of *Huntstock.com* in Boston, in partnership with Mark Hunt, Creative Director. Huntstock is a lifestyle image production company specializing in People with Disabilities, Elder Lifestyle, Industry/Technology and Boston Icons. Mark has been featured in magazines for his iconic travel photography, and for the community being built around Positive Lifestyle with Disabilities. pat@huntstock.com.)

Participating Agencies:

age fotostock
Alamy
Alaska Stock
Animals Animals/Earth Scenes
Art Image LA

Aurora Photos
Blend Images
CGI Backgrounds
Citizen Stock
ClassicStock
Danita Delimont
Dreamstime
DRK Photo
Education Imagery
Envision
Esto
eStock Photo
Everett Collection
Getty Images
Glasshouse Images
Grant Heilman Photography
Huntstock
Image Source
ImageZoo
IPNStock
Kobal Collection
Lebrecht Music & Arts Photo Library
Lonely Planet Images
Map Resources
Masterfile
maXx images
Media Bakery
Menez Archive Projects
Minden Pictures
myLoupe
North Wind Picture Archives
Pacific Stock
PhotoSpin
Phototake
Pictures From Our Past
Robert Harding World Imagery
Robertstock
Rubberball
Science Faction
Stock Connection
StockFood
StockShop
StockTrek Images
SuperStock
Tetra Images
The Art Archive

The Bridgeman Art Library
The Granger Collection
The Image Works
The Science Picture Company
Transtock
Veer
WIN-Initiative
Wolfgang Kaehler Photography

© 2011 Pat Hunt