

LEGAL HISTORY & HISTORICAL RESEARCH

I. GETTING STARTED

Historical research typically includes

primary sources: firsthand reports or evidence of historical events and conditions, often found in magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, diaries, letters, speeches, autobiographies, portraits and photographs, as well as in laws, court decisions, and government and other historical documents from the time period being researched; and

secondary sources: second hand reports or information about a topic, including scholarly books, biographies, historical legal treatises, journal articles, dissertations, and academic and topical web sites.

Begin by searching the Hofstra University Library catalog for your topic, by keyword.

Find a book about or closely related to your topic; look at the "SUBJECT" area in the catalog record; search on relevant subjects to find more books and other resources.

For many historical topics, excellent one-volume studies provide: (1) a coherent overview of the subject; and (2) references to more print and online sources such as journal and newspaper articles, other books, useful web sites, and historical documents such as Congressional debates, statutes, and speeches.

II. FINDING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES ONLINE

L= Law Library database

http://law.hofstra.edu/Library/Research/libres_online.cfm

A= Axinn Library database

http://www.hofstra.edu/Libraries/Axinn/axinn_db.cfm?type=subject&desc=no

F= free Web site

Biographical Sources

Biography Reference Bank – covers 500,000 people; biographies, obituaries, many images (A)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005 – biographies of Members of Congress from the First Continental Congress through 2005 (F)

URL: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/hd108-222/index.html>

Who's Who in American History – brief biographies; contributors to American history (A)

Historical Legal Treatises and Legal Classics

HeinOnline: Legal Classics Library – classic historical works of Ancient, English, and American law; full-text; PDF (L)

The Making of Modern Law: Legal Treatises, 1800-1926 – treatises on British and American law, searchable by country, legal topic, title, keyword, and more; full-text; PDF (L)

19th Century Masterfile – largest resource for pre-1925 historical research; 19th century journal and newspaper articles, books, and US and UK government documents; some full-text (A)

WorldCat – Database combining the catalogs of many libraries worldwide (L/A)

Journal and Magazine Articles

Academic Search Premier – Multidisciplinary full-text database of scholarly journals (A)
America: History and Life – Complete bibliographic reference to the history of the United States and Canada, prehistory to the present; citations and abstracts of articles and dissertations (A)
HeinOnline – searchable full-text law journal database covering issues from first published volume (some 19th century) to current within 2 to 5 years; PDF (L)
Historical Abstracts – Database indexing journals, books and dissertations in the field of history from 1450 to the present; excludes United States and Canada; citations and abstracts (A)
JSTOR – Multidisciplinary, full-text database of authoritative history, social science and humanities journals, 19th century issues to current within about 5 years ; PDF (A)
Making of America (MOA) – digital library of primary sources in American social history, mostly journals and books from the pre-Civil war period through 1877; full-text; at URL's: <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/> (Cornell materials) and <http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moagrp/> (University of Michigan materials); Hofstra University Library Catalog "Journal Finder" provides links to journals (F)
19th Century Masterfile – largest resource for pre-1925 historical research; 19th century journal and newspaper articles, books, and US and UK government documents; some full-text (A)

Papers and Dissertations

Dissertation Abstracts Online – multidisciplinary U.S., Canadian, British and European dissertations; citations for 1861 to present; abstracts for dissertations since 1980 (A)
SSRN (Social Science Research Network) – research papers from major academic institutions, strong in legal and economic subjects; some full-text, downloadable and printable, PDF (L)

Newspaper Articles

New York Times Historical (1851-2003) – searchable full-text articles; full page images (A)
19th Century Masterfile – largest resource for pre-1925 historical research; 19th century journal and newspaper articles, books, and US and UK government documents; some full-text (A)

Government and Other Historical Documents

American Memory – Library of Congress collection providing free searchable access to political, social, biographical, photographic, and other primary documents that chronicle America's history; <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html> (F)
Avalon Project at Yale Law School: Documents in History, Law and Diplomacy – major documents from pre-18th century (many from England and colonial America) through 21st century; searchable full-text collection; <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm> (F)
CQ Historic Document Series – primary documents of world culture since 1972 (A)
LLMC-Digital – largest collection of legal and government documents in microform format (L)
19th Century Masterfile – largest resource for pre-1925 historical research; 19th century journal and newspaper articles, books, and US and UK government documents; some full-text (A)
United States Serial Set – government documents from 1789 to 1969, via LexisNexis Congressional Universe (L)

General Research Tools

- *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web* – outstanding American history portal with primary documents and links to over 1000 Web Sites; <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/> (F)

