

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF STUDENTS' RESEARCH, ASSIGNMENTS, AND DISCUSSIONS

Gale Primary Sources brings the thoughts, words, and actions of past centuries into the present for a comprehensive research experience. With authoritative content and powerful search technologies, this platform has been thoughtfully designed to help students and researchers examine literary, political, and social culture of the last 500 years and develop a more meaningful understanding of how history continues to impact the world today.

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Sarah Horowitz

ENRICHING STUDENTS' RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Sarah Horowitz, Ph.D., an associate professor of history at Washington and Lee University, is focused on improving students' research experience by making primary source materials readily available. Horowitz teaches a class on crime and scandal in the nineteenth century, which requires students to complete a research project. "To aid their research efforts, students use *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*; the *Times Digital Archive*; and *Crime, Punishment, and Popular Culture*. These resources have enabled students to really discover valuable content that may have otherwise been missed. At best, they would have had access to microfilm, and getting students to read microfilm is a challenge in itself," says Horowitz. "In the crime and scandal class, we talk a lot about newspaper coverage—how different papers cover things—so they can sometimes follow a case and look at the different ways in which it's covered and think about the biases of the newspapers."



When asked about the tools and features used beyond full-text searching to aid research, Horowitz went on to describe how *Crime, Punishment, and Popular Culture* has proven to be valuable: “We use the archive’s text analysis feature in my crime and scandal class, which is also a class on digital text analysis. This lets the students see what words are related to other words and they can use these tools to play around with discovery as well as identify key and common words throughout the articles.”

The *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive* is another resource Horowitz uses for particular assignments. “This archive is very comprehensive. It has a full survey of what is available and covers such a large span of time. There is so much content the students can explore. I do have to walk the students through how the database is divided up into different sections, but this is also helping them with the skills of using databases, and with refining searches to focus their research,” says Horowitz.



Sarah Horowitz,
Associate Professor
of History, Washington
and Lee University in
Lexington, VA

When discussing the benefits of using digitized history materials, Horowitz described the notable impact they have on students new to research: “*Gale Primary Sources* has allowed me to get students to do research much earlier in their college careers. I have had as many as 40 entry-level students and getting them to the library to find information just isn’t going to happen. If it’s their first term at college, motivating them to make that investment in time can be really hard. So, being able to access primary sources in a really rich and comprehensive way—from their desks—is crucial. Also, if I know the content they’re using has already been curated, I can be sure they’re going to come up with research that fits and is relevant to the class. Almost anything that comes up in a search will work, and they can dive into the assignment with confidence. This, in part, means their level of understanding of the topic will improve as they focus on what’s important.”

IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Since using *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*, Horowitz has seen improvements in the quality of students’ research, assignments, and discussions on European history from 1500 to 1789. She explains, “A challenge with one particular assignment I set is that there’s a lot of material to cover. The focus is on questions about global trade, human rights, and the relationship between the two. There is a lot on slave trade, the emergence of human rights, and arguments in the eighteenth century. I require students to write a 4–6 page paper with arguments for, and against, slavery from an eighteenth-century perspective. They then have to come up with their own eighteenth-century editorial opinion piece on slavery using eighteenth-century terms to explain their editorial. They



must indicate what sources were read and how they arrived at the arguments they use. Using digital primary sources in this way has enabled me to get students to do research early on and in a manageable way. Again, very different from just sending them to the library to find books. It also has forced them to unpack eighteenth-century arguments more closely, so they have to think about how this person is making their argument. Are they appealing to religion, enlightenment values, emotion, or using language about human rights? In many cases, they really come to have a better understanding—not just on notions of human rights, but of eighteenth-century mindsets—by having to reproduce these ideas themselves.” She continues, “It really gets them into the minds of someone from the eighteenth century, and it allows the students with solid analytical skills to shine; although it’s still a challenge for them, but it also allows the students who are learning these skills to have a clear structure they can follow.”

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ATTRACTING NEW AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Lastly, when asked how digital archives might attract new or prospective students, Horowitz concludes, “Yes, one of the things I think about a lot is letting students know that your class isn’t just going to be fun, but they will be able to do these original things that are more engaging than the classic assignment request, ‘Please compare and contrast these two stories you’ve already read, or choose a topic and do some research about it and write me a paper.’ *Gale Primary Sources* helps me create more thought-provoking and creative assignments. I can teach classes that are exciting for students, yet broadens their understanding of history and provides opportunity for much more individual exploration. It also makes reading 40 papers, from students who have done their own research, far more interesting. I think they spend more time on these papers, and while it is a lot of work for them, it is much more fun, and they really enjoy the process of writing them. And that’s what a successful assignment is, you may work harder, but you are getting more out of it as well.”

FEATURED RESOURCES

Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive, divided into four parts, is the largest digital archive on the history of slavery in America. This collection contains more than five million cross-searchable pages of primary source documents derived from a variety of materials, such as well-known journals, private papers, monographs, pamphlets, manuscripts, and periodicals that offer an unprecedented look at the economic, gender, legal, religious, and government issues surrounding slavery.



SUCCESS STORY: GALE PRIMARY SOURCES

Crime, Punishment, and Popular Culture, 1790-1920, presents the broadest and deepest collection of materials supporting the study of nineteenth-century criminal history, law, literature, and justice. With 2.1 million pages of trial transcripts, police and forensic reports, detective novels, newspaper accounts, true crime literature, and related ephemera, this quintessential resource enhances researchers' understanding of the intersection of law and society during a pivotal era of social change.

ABOUT

Sarah Horowitz, Ph.D., is an associate professor of history at Washington and Lee University and program head for women, gender, and sexuality studies. Her research and teaching focuses on modern European history, post-revolutionary France to present day, and the history of women in Europe. *Gale Primary Sources* has been a valuable resource for Horowitz. She explains, "Washington and Lee University is very much set up for undergraduates. The library is very well-resourced to support its students, with resources ranging from newspapers, datasets, primary source collections, and historical abstract databases."

Washington and Lee University offers many collections from *Gale Primary Sources* to students, including *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*; *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*; *Archives of Sexuality & Gender*; the *Times Digital Archives*; a collection of historical newspapers; *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*; and *Crime, Punishment, and Popular Culture*.

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