

CASE STUDY

ENHANCING YOUR LIBRARY'S DIGITAL RESOURCES: EMPOWERING STUDENTS

Interview with an international school library in Milan on why they chose *Gale Reference Complete: Schools Edition – Ultimate* to help their school shift to online learning.



Robin Coutras

About:

Robin works as an Upper School Librarian at the American School of Milan. She started her career in 1999 as a high school English teacher and transitioned into the library in 2004. Although most of her career has been spent in public education in the US, she has a variety of experiences: high school and middle school as both a teacher and librarian; public, private, international, rural, and urban schools working with both affluent and at-risk populations. Her most recent interests are learning how to combat disinformation and providing better support and representation through a diverse, inclusive, and equitable library programme.



The Resource:

Gale Reference Complete provides subscription access to the largest package of primary and secondary sources available to schools today. Empowering users from primary to secondary, *Gale Reference Complete* covers almost every subject and all year levels from K-12 offering high quality, authoritative and unique content to improve student engagement and outcomes. Resources within *Gale Reference Complete* include: *Gale Interactive* databases, *National Geographic Virtual Library*, *Gale in Context* databases, *Gale OneFile* databases, *Gale Literary Sources* databases and *Gale eBooks*.

Why did the library decide to subscribe to *Gale Reference Complete* for Schools?

Robin: When I came to the American School of Milan two years ago, the library had only two online databases for students. During my first year, I observed how these two resources were being used and it didn't feel like all students from Grades 6 through to Grade 12 were benefitting from them. I wanted to provide digital resources that met the needs of all the year levels and, as our budgets were limited, I wanted to streamline our services. That's when I came across *Gale Reference Complete*; there's a variety of different databases covering different subject areas designed for different grade levels from Elementary years up to Grade 12.

How does *Gale Reference Complete* fit into the school's overall acquisition strategies and aims?

Robin: Those of us within the school community who are now experiencing distance learning are really appreciating the importance of having digital resources. Finding and thinking of ways I can incorporate more digital resources into the library's services is guided by 3 factors: the budget, our existing collections, and what the current needs of our students are. *Gale Reference Complete* fits the bill in all 3 areas as well as providing for the needs of more of our students across all year levels.

What distinguishes *Gale Reference Complete* from other subscriptions offerings?

Robin: The subscription databases we had from other publishers were geared more towards our IB Diploma Programme students — so our Grade 11 and Grade 12 students had resources mostly useful for them. What *Gale Reference Complete* does is provide resources for students in earlier grades as well i.e. Grades 6 through to Grade 10. They now have content appropriate for them across a broad range of different subjects. Even our elementary students can access and benefit from the content available in *Gale Reference Complete*.

What attracted you to the technology of the platforms and how might students and teachers find these platforms easy to use?

Robin: The user interfaces were immediately appealing – I was struck by how simple, intuitive and user friendly they were when compared to the interfaces of other database vendors.

The Topic Finder is a really neat visual tool that can lead students into their research; they search for a topic, and then the tool visually provides sub-topics and even topics within sub-topics that students can click on with ease and view a full list of search results for within that particular topic area. They can then play around with ideas that they have without spending a whole lot of time getting lost in the search process. This is one of the values of an online database for them. Another feature which is useful for teachers in particular is that they can share with their class a link to an article which allows students to go straight to the article without having to log back in. Once they click the link it just takes them directly to the content, saving a lot of time and headaches for both teachers and students.

In the search results and at the document level (in the *In Context* databases for example), there's a lot of useful information about the content that users can preview. Users can preview reading level detail (Lexile Measures and Content Level), which is useful for the library when they've got a student from Grade 6 and a student from Grade 12 using the same databases. You can see very quickly which content is more appropriate for middle school level students and which is designed more for upper high school level students. Not only can they view at a glance reading level information but also the word count and the content format (i.e. whether it's an essay or a review). The whole environment is just really well organized and user friendly.

The screenshot shows the 'Global Warming' page in the Gale Reference Complete database. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation links. The main content area features an 'OVERVIEW' section with a small image of a glacier and a text block explaining global warming. Below this, there's a 'ON THIS PAGE' section with various resource categories like Case Studies, Reference, Biographies, Statistics, and Images. A 'SEARCH WITHIN RESULTS' section is also visible, showing search filters and results for 'CASE STUDIES (228)' and 'REFERENCE (962)'.

The screenshot displays the 'Topic Finder' tool in the Gale Power Search database. It shows a search for 'Global Warming' and a visualization of related terms in a word cloud. The word cloud includes terms like 'Global Warming', 'Financial Statements', 'New Members', 'Electric Vehicles', 'Exchange Commission', 'Release', and '8-K'. To the right, there's a 'RESULTS' section with a list of news articles related to global warming solutions.

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Search' interface in the Gale Reference Complete database. It features a search bar and several filters. The 'SEARCH FOR' section allows users to search for 'Global Warming' in 'Environment' and 'Keyword'. The 'MORE OPTIONS' section includes checkboxes for 'Full Text Documents', 'Peer-Reviewed Journals', 'Document Contains Images', and 'Labeled Documents'. There are also options to filter by 'publication date(s)', 'document type', and 'content type'.

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How does *Gale Reference Complete* help improve the quality of student learning?

Robin: Features like the user-friendly interfaces and Topic Finder tool make the student’s user experience less frustrating when compared to their experience of using other databases. It’s a more pleasant research experience for them using *Gale Reference Complete* which is fantastic, because if they enjoy searching they will want to return again and again to *Gale Reference Complete* to repeat their searching experience with other projects and assignments.



How does *Gale Reference Complete* for Schools help students to become future ready)?

Robin: *Gale Reference Complete*’s user friendly interface can encourage students to use databases before they go off to university where they are faced with a host of different databases. *Gale Reference Complete* helps ease the transition to Higher Education; they’re learning the value of databases and how using databases can enrich their research as well as serve as important sources for credible and reliable content, especially peer reviewed articles. With *Gale Reference Complete* school students start to understand what peer reviewed articles are and how to use them. They begin to understand the importance and the value that peer reviewed articles bring to their research.

Any final words of advice to other school libraries?

Robin: I think *Gale Reference Complete* is a great product and a great tool – a lot of bang for your buck is what I think school libraries get with *Gale Reference Complete*!

This interview is an edited version of a recorded webinar interview with Robin hosted by Gale on October 15th, 2020 entitled How to facilitate teaching and learning in International schools using *Gale Reference Complete: Schools Edition – Ultimate*

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gale.com/intl/trial/gale-reference-complete

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