

The National Digital Newspaper Program and “Chronicling America”

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(Slide 1) The National Digital Newspaper Program is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress to create and maintain a free, online resource of selected American newspapers published between 1836 and 1922. The papers are selected and digitized by state projects funded by the NEH. The Library of Congress aggregates and makes accessible all state titles in a database called “Chronicling America” so users can search topics in multiple newspapers across the nation. Issues published after 1922 are excluded because any publication after this date is subject to copyright restrictions. The web site also includes a directory of bibliographic information for over 140,000 American newspapers printed from 1690 to the present.

(Slide 2) Currently, the database contains 727 newspapers published in 25 states. The Library of Congress has contributed DC newspapers from its collections. As the project is ongoing, new content continues to expand and is nearing 5 million digitized pages. This year, Chronicling America will also include newspapers written in French and Spanish. Titles in other languages will be added in the future. Because we aim to include content from all states and territories, we fund new state projects every year. 28 state projects have been funded thus far. This year, we anticipate adding four new states.

In a moment, I will walk you through some of the basic features of Chronicling America. But, first, I would like to mention that we hope to see the site becoming an essential resource for students.

(Slide 3) The newspapers in this database do not include the major national titles such as The New York Times or Washington Post. Instead, Chronicle America makes accessible local city and regional papers selected to reflect geographic and social diversity within a state. Often these papers were published for a specific audience (such as ethnic or racial groups, farmers, or labor organizations) or with a particular political or social bias (for example, emancipation or women’s

suffrage). As a result, students can trace a local event across one or several state newspapers. Or, they can study how a national event or topic was reported across several states and from several different journalistic perspectives. This type of in-depth investigation is facilitated by full text search of every article, headline, and advertisement. With a nearly limitless capacity to search for historical topics that fall within the period between the 1830s and 1922, *Chronicling America*, is an incredibly powerful resource. However, this resource requires guidance from teachers and media specialists to help students maximize learning or research potential.

(Slide 4) I should mention that even if there are no newspapers from your state in *Chronicling America*, you can find news about your state. For instance, there are over 348,000 pages of Nevada news in papers from Arizona, California, Utah and other states.

(Slide 5) *Chronicling America* can be accessed anywhere there is an internet connection such as home, school, and library. All that is needed is the following url: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

When you open the home page, the first thing that you will likely notice are the front pages of several state newspapers published on today's date a century ago. By browsing through these pages, you can explore the news that commanded attention in different parts of the nation 100 years ago. You can also familiarize yourself with the features of historical newspapers such as the front page advertisements found in many titles, which are not typical of contemporary newsprint.

To launch deeper into *Chronicling America*, you have two options. You can enter search terms into an open search menu bar seen here or you can select from a list of Recommended Topics organized by the Library of Congress. For students who may not have a specific topic or keywords in mind, the Recommended Topics would be a useful entry point to this resource.

(Slide 6) These bibliographic guides, which are not specifically designed for classroom use, showcase significant people, events and fads reported by the American press.

(Slide 7) As illustrated in the Early Cinema guide seen here, the guides provide useful tips for finding information about the topic such as important dates, some sample articles, searching strategies, and keywords appropriate for the historical period. Students should be aware that contemporary terms may not return relevant content. For instance, this guide to “Early Cinema” suggests using appropriate historical keywords such as Moving Pictures, Motion Pictures, Kinetoscope, and Nickelodeon.

While these guides contain interesting sample articles, the bibliography is not exhaustive. Using one of the provided search terms, or inputting your own terms, will yield several more results. Students should be encouraged to think about the Recommended Topics as a starting point for additional investigation.

(Slide 8) Clicking on one of the sample articles in a guide opens a full page view with tools for browsing and reading. At the top of the page, there is information about the newspaper you are reading and the institution that contributed it. At the bottom, you will see the “Persistent Link.” This unique web address will always open this page and, therefore, should be used in all citations of this page.

(Slide 9) Once you have selected a newspaper page to view, there are a number of ways to interact with it. By left-clicking and holding down the button of your mouse you can move around the page. The zooming tools in the upper left side of the image allow you to amplify and resize the image. You can open a full screen image by clicking the button to the right of the home key. The gray menu bar above the image provides navigation features so you can move to other pages of an issue or between issues of the same title.

(Slide 10) The “All Pages” link displays thumbnails of all pages of an issue and the “All Issues” link brings up a calendar with links to all available issues for that newspaper.

(Slide 11) You can save a page as a “PDF” or “JPEG2000” file. There is another great feature--the clip image tool. It allows you to clip a portion of a page such as an article, photo, advertisement, or political cartoon for use in a digital presentation. In a focus group we conducted on using Chronicling America for NHD presentations, students reported that this tool made it very easy to reuse newspaper content for their presentations.

(Slide 12) The clip comes with citation information and the persistent web address. It will be important to instruct students to include this information in their bibliography.

Of course, the Recommend Topics list discussed earlier is only one way for exploring Chronicling America. The site offers many search tools for open-ended exploration. Initially you have the option to search across all digitized content.

(Slide 13) If we try a basic search by typing for example, “Mark Twain,” in quotes and press Go, the query returns over 36,200 pages--too many for anyone to peruse. But note that the results are displayed as thumbnail images with keywords highlighted in red so you can open a page and zoom in the relevant section. The pages are organized according to relevance, but you can reorganize them by earliest date, state, or newspaper title. Whenever you get these many results, you will want to guide students to use the Advanced Search.

(Slide 14) In this example, by refining the “Mark Twain” search to Missouri from 1860 to 1890, we get a more manageable 300 pages.

The Advanced Search tab provides additional search filters. For instance, you can limit a search to two or more states or to front pages. You can also limit a search to a particular title or even a specific date.

(Slide 15) For example, if we limit a search to all available newspaper titles published on April 10, 1865, we get 24 pages. The Daily National Republican published in Washington, DC has a headline that reads: “The End. Surrender of Lee’s Army. Grant Dictates the Terms.” The article consists of correspondence between Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant regarding the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. There are other advanced search options.

(Slide 16) Clicking on the “All Digitized Newspapers” tab opens up a window with a list of all available titles. You can filter the list by state, ethnicity, or language by clicking on the drop-down boxes to select an option. For instance, if we select African American from the ethnicity box, we get papers from several states.

Let us take a look at “The Bee.” You will notice that there is a lot of information that can help place the newspaper in historical context. The line for the “The Bee,” shows the place of publication, the title, a calendar for browsing available issues, links to the earliest and latest issue of the title, and a “More Info” link.

(Slide 17) This last link opens up the directory record for “The Bee,” which includes bibliographic data as well as a summary description of its scope, content, and significance. This information is helpful to understand the stance of the editors and the views that will be reflected in editorials. For instance, the description of “The Bee” indicates that the primary concern of this paper was civil rights for America’s blacks and that it represented the Republican attitudes of its editor, William C. Chase. The initial motto of the paper was “Sting for Our Enemies—Honey for Our Friends.”

(Slide 18) We hope Chronicling America will become an essential resource for teaching your history, social studies, and language arts curriculum. The website can be used to discuss all kinds of topics including a history of advertising, fiction writing, or sports, to name a few. For example, you may have students search for commercial products such as Coca Cola, Campbell Soup, or Ivory Soap, which will bring numerous examples of ads with graphics that show how marketing changed over time. An advanced search for the phrase “Indianapolis automobile races” turns some interesting pages on this sport. Searching for Thomas Edison and electricity in 10 words of proximity returns news about Edison’s inventions from the 1880s to 1922.

Finally, I would like to point out that we are in the process of developing tools to help educators use Chronicling America. With the help of EDSITEment, we will be encouraging the educational community, to share their ideas, searches, and curricula using Chronicling America. We hope to announce those opportunities in the near future, so stay tuned!