

The Chronicling America database provides free full text online access to over 15 million pages of digital Historic American newspapers. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and supported by the Library of Congress, Chronicling America has content from state partners spanning nearly two centuries.

This resource is free for anyone to access online from home, school, work or anywhere with internet access. Content continues to grow every year. In this video you will learn how newspapers can enhance your research and how you can use Chronicling America to search, refine, and cite the information that you find.

Newspapers are valuable primary resource that provide diverse perspectives on daily life in America and reactions to major turning points in history. These perspectives come in the form of articles, letters, obituaries, poems, advertisements, and more. Chronicling America has been use to strengthen personal research, enhance National History Day projects and create award winning digital humanities projects.

Chronicling America gives two searching options in tabs at the top of the main page. Search Pages, or basic search, and an advanced search that gives you more filtering options. When starting your research it is often best to begin with very broad key terms to get a sense of what content is available and then narrow your search. For instance, if I am interested in women's suffrage I can type the broad topic of "women's suffrage" in the search pages search box to find over 62 thousand results. If you look closely at the results page you will see key terms highlighted in the image thumbnails. The more highlighting you see the more times your key terms appear in each image.

If your initial key terms do not render the best results try adding or removing words and consider synonyms for search terms already used. If you receive too many results you can easily narrow down the list by using the advanced search tab to limit by state of publication, date range, language, and other options. As your topic becomes more specific you can use specific names, places, events, and dates to find the most relevant results. Keep in mind that historic newspapers had a delay in reporting events. So make sure to look at a range of dates to capture all of the coverage.

Articles aren't the only thing you can find in Chronicling America. If you search carefully you can find advertisements, cartoons and other information that can help you put your topic into historical context. When you find that perfect article or image always remember to cite your resource.

Chronicling America provides a pre-generated citation at the bottom of every full image page to get you started. But make sure you follow the citation style that best matches your needs.

Keep in mind that you are searching digital microfilm with images that can be two centuries old. Faded text, mixed fonts, page rips, or other natural limitations can impact full text searching. Use the database to narrow results but don't hesitate to manually read through the content to find the perfect results.