The Voice of Experience

One can reasonably say that research libraries today routinely include the entire Internet... but that the Internet does not, and cannot, contain more than a small fraction of everything discoverable within a research library's walls. (The Oxford Guide to Library Research, p. xvi)

All three of Paratext's resources are prominently featured in the most recent edition of Thomas Mann's book, The Oxford Guide to Library Research, 4th ed., 2015. He consistently places them as the top recommended 'go-to' sources for scholarly research. His book provides an extensive overview of the best online and print sources, as well as the best alternatives to the Internet.

Reference Universe: 1975-2017

On *Reference Universe* itself...

Two databases for identifying initial overview articles deserve particular emphasis, Reference Universe and Web of Science. *(p. 2)*

Although **Reference Universe** *indexes many kinds of reference, it is* **particularly useful in indexing individual articles in specialized subject encyclopedias.** *Most students are familiar with a few general sets such as* Encyclopedia Britannica, World Book *or* Encyclopedia Americana *(and, of course, Wikipedia) but very few realize how many thousands of other encyclopedias exist.* (p. 2)

In another instance, **a student writing a paper on 'moonshining' found two encyclopedias in very different disciplines** *that had articles on the subject: the* 10-volume Dictionary of American History (2002) *and the* 4-volume Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol & Addictive Behavior (2008). *The articles from both sets overlapped in recommending one particular work in their short bibliographies, Joseph Dabney's* Mountain Spirits (1985), *so* **that became a basic point of departure for her next step**. *(p. 8)*

On the benefits of subject encyclopedias...

...one particularly useful feature of specialized encyclopedia articles is that they usually provide a brief bibliography of highly recommended sources for further study. This produces a fourth advantage: you can frequently use these selective bibliographies to identify immediately the "standard" best books on a particular topic, which would otherwise tend to be buried in larger retrievals. (p. 8)

19th Century Masterfile: 1106-1930

19th Century Masterfile from Paratext, includes a complete computerized version of a venerable printed source, *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature (1802-1906)*, which covers nearly 500 American and English periodicals. In addition to the Index itself, Paratext has augmented Poole's with dates for all citations—not in the originals—and corrected all title abbreviations.

Deep indexing and full-text...

The database, however, goes way beyond this, with some coverage back to the 1200s and forward to about 1930. The goal of the company is to include all relevant indexes to material published in English before 1930, with links to any full text of the source documents, wherever available.

So far, links to more than 13 million full texts within other library subscriptions (e.g., JSTOR, American Periodicals Series, Hein Online) or in freely available websites... The database, up to now, has digitized and edited more than 70 indexes to nineteenth-century magazines, newspapers, books, U.S. patents, and government publications (both American and British). (p. 120-1)

*To see the current **19th Century Masterfile: 1106-1930** content list, click **here.**

U.S. Documents Masterfile: 1774-2017

U.S. Documents Masterfile is a subscription database from Paratext; **it indexes the vast majority of U.S. government documents from 1774 to date.** *It incorporates many of the print sources mentioned above, along with a variety of others.* (p. 266)

On government research...

If you have not used government documents before, you almost have to make a leap of faith to start looking for them, but the probability is that you will be pleasantly surprised. Students who use documents will almost invariably find that none of their classmates has found the same sources. (p. 264)

On the difficulty of SuDoc numbers...

Libraries that own large collections of government documents often shelve them separately rather than integrate them into the general collections. This is done because... the alphanumeric patterns of SuDocs numbers are such that they cannot be interfiled with such traditional shelf arrangement schemes. The result is that you will not find documents through two of the major avenues of subject access to the library's books: the computer catalog and shelf browsing. (p. 264)

About the Author

Thomas Mann, Ph.D., has been a general reference librarian in the main room of the Library of Congress for more than thirty years. Before his work at the Library, Tom worked as a private investigator, no doubt bringing a unique set of sleuthing skills sure to assist in the realm of library research. He received his Ph.D. from Loyola University of Chicago and his M.L.S. from Louisiana State University.