

8-1-2000

Perseus

Elizabeth McKeigue

Santa Clara University, emckeigue@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.scu.edu/library>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McKeigue, E. "Perseus." (Review) *Library Journal* 1 August 2000.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University Library at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Staff publications, research, and presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact rscroggin@scu.edu.

□ DATABASE & DISC REVIEWS □

EDITOR: CHERYL LaGUARDIA

ELECTRONICALLY SPEAKING... The Gale Group's **History Resource Center: U.S.** is a web database many libraries will want to run, not walk, out and acquire. Large (and/or relatively well-heeled) business and public libraries requiring extensive access to world marketing data will want to take a look at two new discs from Euromonitor, while li-

braries of all sizes, shapes, and types should be aware of a little gem of a disc from the University of California about how to get rid of garden pests.

WEB HISTORY RESOURCE CENTER: U.S.

Gale Group (800-877-GALE;
galeord@galegroup.com);
www.galenet.com

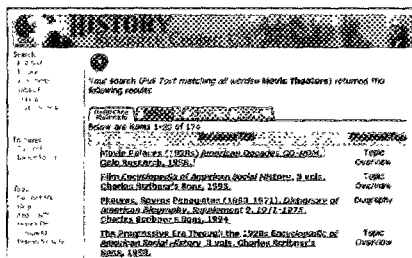
Date reviewed: 6/16/00

Price: Negotiated by site.

History Resource Center: U.S. combines a variety of sources as it positions itself to be the starting point for American historical research. Consistent with the Gale approach, it offers access to selected entries from several Gale resources: **American Decade CD-ROM**, **American Eras**, **DIS-Covering U.S. History**, **DISCovering World History**, **Worldmark Encyclopedia of Canadian Provinces**, **Worldmark Encyclopedia of States**, and **Worldmark Encyclopedia of Nations**. Having access to this wide variety of resources is wonderful, but scope and coverage is unclear. The Gale description says some materials are included from the above resources but not exactly what is and what is not excerpted. Still, there is a great deal of added value in this resource, with the inclusion of several classic reference sources, full-text journals, and more. Among the reference sources are *Dictionary of American Biography*, *Dictionary of American History*, *Dictionary of American History Supplement*, and *Dictionary of American Social History*.

There are over 60 full-text journals, newspapers, primary source documents, and radio and television transcripts. This totals 100,000 pages of 500 primary source documents (with facsimile pages provided), over 25,000 reference documents from Gale titles, 2000 photographs, and 30 historical maps. Finally, the site also provides access to several ready-reference sources: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, *Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary*, and *Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary*. The full-

Cheryl LaGuardia is the Head of Instructional Services for the Harvard College Library, author of *Becoming a Library Teacher* (Neal-Schuman, 2000), and winner of the 1996 Louis Shores-Oryx Press Award for Excellence in Reviewing



text journals include *Antioch Review*, *American Indian Quarterly*, *History Review*, *Civil War History*, *Pacific Historical Review*, and *Mississippi Quarterly*.

Several search paths are offered: Full-Text searching of all the texts in the collection, Subject, Time Period, Custom, and Person searching. Full-Text searching is the default search screen. You can ask the system to locate records with all or any of your words, or to find an exact phrase. Searching incorporates Boolean operators, truncation, and proximity operators. Your results will be nicely clustered into the following groups: Reference Materials, Full-Text Journals, Primary Sources, and Journal Citations.

Results for Subject searches provide an option to go directly to the citations to view a Hierarchy of subject terms. Time Period Searches allow for searching by a range of dates specified. Searching by Person allows for a variety of possibilities and combinations: Name, Nationality, Ethnicity, Gender, Birth and Death Dates, and Birth Place and Death Place. Custom Search combines elements of many of the above searches, its strength being the ability to combine these elements: Full-Text, Subject, Time Period, Title/Headline, Source, Author, and Date of Publication. You can also limit searches by Document Type (which includes Audio), Biography, Commentary, Country Overview (a little odd in a source about American History), Era Overview, Event Overview, Image, Map, Periodicals, Primary Document, Province Overview (for Canada), State Overview, Timeline Event, and Topic Overview.

Given the variety of resources included here, the material is wonderfully broad and eclectic. Read a biography of the last Colonial governor (Thomas Hutchinson) or a brief history of *I Love Lucy*. Read a review of architecture from the 1930s, an analysis of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, or a primary source document on the reflec-

tions of a visiting Englishwoman on American manners in 1818.

The system incorporates good authority work, excellent help, and clear directions on how to cite the entries. Navigation is clear, screen design ranges from a simple Google-like screen to the advanced custom search, so all tastes can be accommodated, and e-mailing entries is simple. A Student Research Guide outlines good research strategy: the main page spotlights a historical event and offers a historical chronology and the option to participate in historical chats.

Is there anything that doesn't work well? The previously mentioned ambiguity surrounding coverage is an issue for libraries already owning some of the titles included here. There are also entries from sources not listed, such as *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, *The Presidents: A Reference History*, and *Scribner Encyclopedia of American Lives*. This needs to be cleaned up or explained as well. Internal cross-referencing is rather weak; I would have liked the opportunity to restrict my search to a particular resource. But these are merely quibbles.

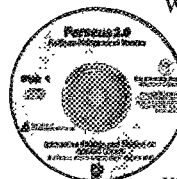
The Bottom Line: History Resource Center: U.S. is a resource that succeeds admirably in its goal to be the starting point for historical research. Kudos especially to Gale for eschewing bells and whistles in favor of quality text. Highly recommended for public libraries, high school collections, and undergraduate academic collections.—*Ed Tallent, Reference, Boston Coll.*

CD-ROM PERSEUS 2.0

Yale Univ. Pr. (800-987-7323;
specproj.press@yale.edu).
www.yale.edu/yup/Perseus2.html
Windows 3.1+ / Mac OS 7+. 1998.
ISBN 0-300-08092-1.

Price: \$350 (four discs); 1disc ed. \$150.

When exploring the vast territory of ancient Greek culture, let Perseus heroically guide the way... **Perseus 2.0** that is. A product of the Perseus Project at Tufts University, this virtual library includes more than 420 works by 31 authors in both Greek (e.g., Plato, Homer) and English, extremely detailed entries for Greek art and architecture located throughout the world, and a number of reference works (such as a 35,000-word Greek-English lexicon, an encyclopedia, and a searchable atlas of the ancient world). In addition, there are over 25,000 full-screen images (photographs



LEGEND

WEB Web-based Database CD-ROM CD-ROM

DATABASE&DISC REVIEWS

and drawings) of architecture, archaeological sites, coins, vases, and sculpture.

The navigation bar and hypertext links facilitate searching the massive amount of data (four CD-ROMs' worth!). Perusing an entry on the Erechtheion in Athens led me to architectural drawings of the layout of how this building on the Acropolis once looked. Near the Erechtheion stood the "stoa," and even though I wasn't sure what this was, all I had to do was run a quick "look up" search in the encyclopedia to learn that this was "a colonnade, such as those built outside or inside temples, around dwelling houses, gymnasia, and market-places."

The textual and pictorial detail provided is amazing. Users get a closer look at Theseus slaying the Minotaur on a black Attic vase on a computer screen here than they would standing in front of the real thing in its display case at the Antikensammlungen in Munich.

What could be better than this exceptional CD-ROM resource for researching Ancient Greece? Well, there may be one thing...the Perseus Digital Library at www.perseus.tufts.edu. The web version of Perseus is not only easier to search (there's a handy search box on every page), but it actually includes the complete text of more works than the CD-ROMs do. The main stated differences between the Digital Library and the CD-ROMs are that the producer provides access to the web version "as an act of collegiality but without any guarantees, implicit or otherwise" and that the web includes only a portion of the images on the CD-ROM. A search for images of a sculpture of an "owl" turns up a photograph of the Piraeus Athena in both resources, but the web site provides only a "thumbnail" image. However, the web version surpasses the CD-ROM in many other ways, most notably on its presentation of the text resources. I viewed Plato's *Phaedo* on the CD-ROM and wasn't able to figure out how to move beyond the first "page." On the free web version, it is immediately evident how to navigate the entire text. However, the CD-ROM does display the Greek and English text side by side, while on the web one must switch back and forth between the English and Greek views.

Also available for less than half the price of the complete CD-ROM four-disc set, a single-disc "Concise Edition" of Perseus includes the textual database, the encyclopedia, the lexicon, and the atlas but provides only 5200 full-screen images. But again, all these resources and more are included in the free Digital Library web site.

The Bottom Line: Perseus 2.0 creates what would take thousands of linear inches of shelf space (not to mention thousand of dollars) to reproduce in printed form. However, the Perseus Digital Library web site does much the same as what the CD-ROM does (in certain situations,

Readers and producers should contact Cheryl LaGuardia, Instructional Services, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, MA 02138; 617-496-4226; FAX 617-496-9802; <claguard@fas.harvard.edu> with feedback and suggested electronic products for review.

more) for free! You do the math. The contents of both versions are highly recommended for academic and public libraries. If you have a sustained need for owning this information, purchasing the discs gives you more detailed images, side-by-side English and Greek texts, and a guarantee of accuracy and long-term access, while the web site does have that disclaimer (see above). Either way, the Perseus Project products are resources no one should miss.—*Elizabeth McKeigue, Access Svcs., Widener Lib., Harvard*

RESOURCELINK: 18TH-CENTURY WORLD HISTORY

ABC-CLIO (800-368-6868; sales@abc-clio.com); www.abc-clio.com Windows 95+/Mac. 2000. ISBN 1-57607-140-5. Price: \$79.

18th-Century World History, like other members of the ResourceLink series, makes a large collection of primary and secondary historical sources available to secondary school students—materials beyond the scope of most high school libraries. The CD-ROM contains 904 secondary and primary sources. Secondary sources include 237 biographies, 46 descriptions of events, 80 glossary entries, 12 maps, 62 descriptions of organizations, and 25 tables. Primary sources include 80 documents, 288 photos (by which is meant images—paintings and engravings), and 74 quotes. Sources are not organized or linked, merely grouped into major categories: Culture, Economy, Environment, Government, Law, Population, and Society. Students are thus required to do their own connecting and organizing. Students can search or scan the sources and choose items to be incorporated into paper or computer-based reports. Students can also add text of their own and modify the sources, which can be exported to other programs.

The processing system is rather clumsy (as noted in previous reviews: Database&Disc Reviews, *LJ* 7/00, *LJ* 10/1/99, and *LJ* 11/15/98), but the main problem with this product is that the real meat of the collection amounts to only 80 primary documents: there is little concentration in any one area. Much of the collection consists of secondary biographical

sketches (which are well done, each using several standard sources) paired with portraits. Almost all coverage of science, for example, is via these biography-portrait pairs. Linnaeus is included but not Bonnet or Buffon; Lavoisier and Priestley but not Black. The Academie Française has an entry, but not the Academie des Sciences.

The Bottom Line: One can find much more material, both primary and secondary, freely on the web. Not a necessary purchase.—*Fred Burchsted, Reference, Widener Lib., Harvard*

THE UC GUIDE TO SOLVING GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE PROBLEMS: AN INTERACTIVE CD-ROM

Univ. of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Communication Services (800-994-8849; basullivan@ucdavis.edu); anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu Windows 95+/Mac OS 7.5+. 2000. ISBN 1-879906-47-3. Price: \$32.

If you've got a garden, you've got bugs. The University of California at Davis Statewide Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Project, in cooperation with Oregon State and Washington State universities, has put together this interactive CD-ROM offering an environmentally safe redress against those pesky critters. IPM is an ecologically based pest management strategy, which provides long-term prevention or suppression with minimum impact on human health or the environment. Its methodology is to use the biology of the pest against itself, along with the use of nonchemical or low-toxicity pest controls (including beneficial insects) thereby safeguarding the farm, garden, or landscape ecosystem.

Nearly four years of research has gone into developing this disc, which expands on the information contained in two popular garden and landscape books produced by the IPM Project: *Pests of the Garden and Small Farm* and *Pests of Landscape Trees and Shrubs*. Remedies to prevent Dutch elm disease and the spruce bud worm (for *Desk Set* devotees among you!), along with over 600 other pests, are prescribed, with 2800 separate information screens and glorious photos (more on these later) to identify problems accurately. For a preview, look at the very instructive related web site, www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/IPMPROJECT/ADS/cd_solvinggarden.html, which is a faithful representation of what's on the CD. A bibliography of references is also provided ondisc.

The main menu is divided into two sections: Problems of Fruits and Vegetables and Problems of Woody Ornamentals. From artichokes to watermelon, over 40 fruits and vegetables are listed. After you choose one of them, a screen pops up to guide you through pest-solving steps,

LEGEND

 Web-based Database  CD-ROM