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Primary Sources through *Gale Digital Collections*

The *Gale Digital Collections* comprise more than two dozen primary source collections centered on four themes: Making of the Western World, American History & Culture, History & Culture Through Media, and 20th Century Political and Cultural Change. Each theme encompasses a rich selection of primary materials pertaining to politics, law, and society. While the collections derive almost entirely from British and American archives, there is international coverage throughout. Most notably, the 20th Century Political and Cultural Change collections cover Western Europe and the Middle East, through the lens of the major conflicts of that time.

There is such a wealth of content that each collection could be the subject of its own review.

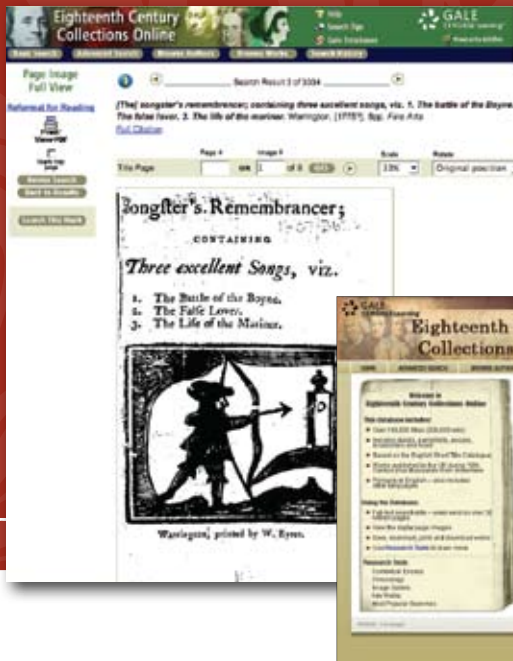
For LPSS members, I will provide very broad content overviews, and then focus on one example, the *Declassified Documents Reference System*.

For more detailed descriptions, please see <http://www.gale.cengage.com/DigitalCollections/overview.htm>.

Each collection under a theme may be purchased individually, or may be bundled with others from any of the topical groupings to meet your institution's research and pricing requirements.

The Making of the Western World, a very ambitious theme, gets historians started with *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* —

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significant publications from Great Britain and the Americas from that century — and delves into the origins of modern law. The *Goldsmiths'-Kress Library of Economic Literature* also falls under this theme. From there the coverage crosses the ocean with the next topic area, American History and Culture, including original documents on law, the Revolution, the Civil War, slavery, immigration, and women's suffrage. The *Sabin Americana* collection supplements this theme with first-person accounts of life and exploration in over 400 years in the Americas.

The perennial problem of indexing for historical newspapers is solved with the History and Culture Through Media collections.

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With the Gale online interface users can

search and retrieve the full text of newspapers dating back to the 17th century in the UK;

19th century U.S. newspapers; *The Economist* archive back to 1843; and *The Times (London) Digital Archive, 1785-1985*.

International relations researchers and modern historians will find abundant background material in the 20th Century Political and Cultural Change collections. Government documents, original accounts, images, maps, books and interpretive essays provide insight into both governance and personal lives during the World Wars and other 20th century conflicts. There are collections centered on the Middle East (Arab-Israeli relations, Iraq), Northern Ireland, and Occupied Western Europe. Other collections explore the more personal impacts on Holocaust survivors, refugees, and women.

Interface and Scope

Since Gale uses the same interface for all the collections, I will focus on my favorite, *Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS)*, to demonstrate usability and scope.



DDRS comprises over 600,000 pages of previously secret U.S. government documents. Gale plans

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to enlarge the archive in 2009 and add approximately 500,000 pages annually after

that. They promise also to expand the types of documents covered, to include statistics, international coverage, memoranda and other unpublished documentation of international relations from the Cold War to present. The FBI Files microfilm will be digitized as well.

As of this writing, **DDRS** draws declassified documents from the past and as they are released from Cabinet meeting minutes, National Security Council policy statements, CIA intelligence studies, Presidential conferences, State Department political analyses, and Joint Chiefs of Staff papers. You may limit your search by document type, source institution, classification level, sanitization and completeness.

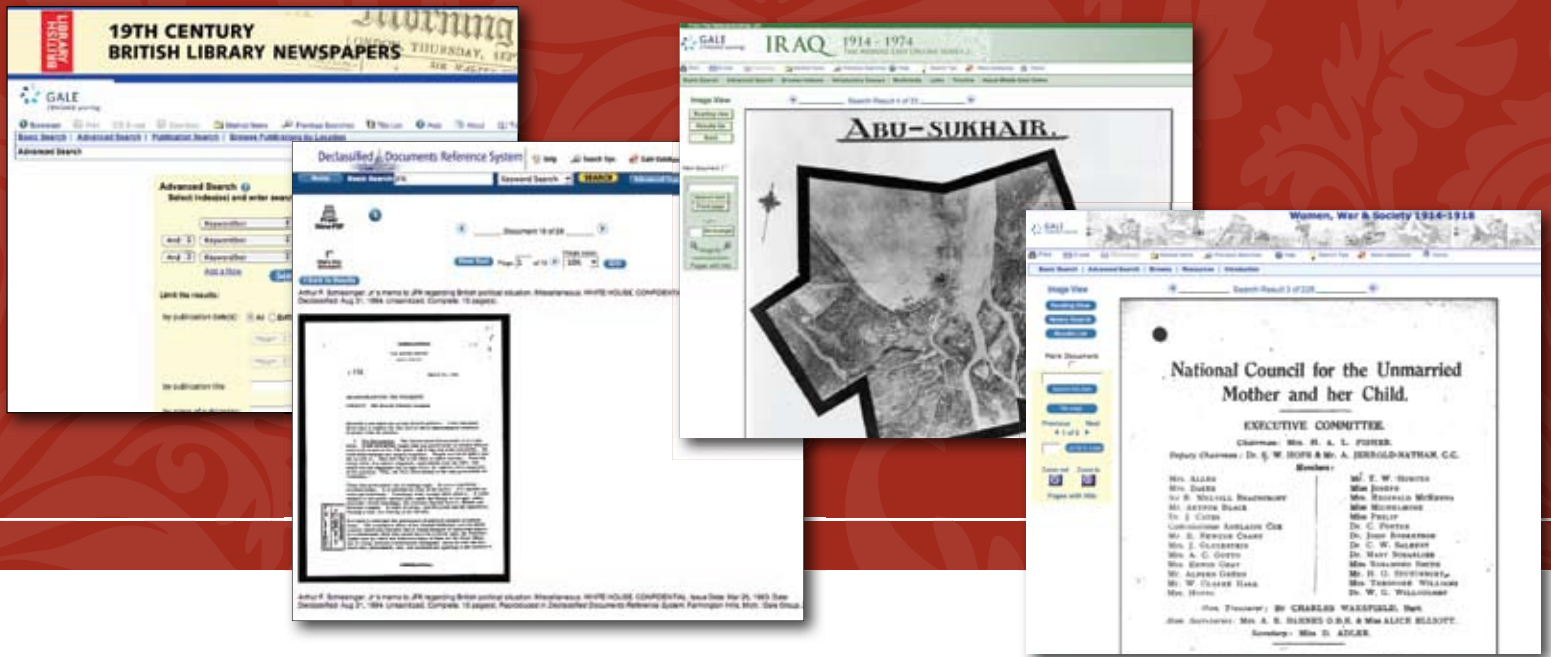
Gale is still working on the controlled vocabulary, so it is most effective to use very broad search terms. For example, “Oliver North” AND “contra” yielded one result, while “Oliver North” alone retrieved 32 hits.

Printing works conveniently from the prominent PDF icon, and e-mailed documents come through successfully.

You may display results by relevancy or by date issued. Once you find documents you want, it is very easy to use them. Printing works conveniently from the prominent PDF icon, and e-mailed documents come through successfully. The “view text” option is a bonus that allows you to get the transcription of documents that are often lined through, scribbled upon, all caps, or otherwise difficult to skim due to the quality of the originals.

Summary

The *Gale Digital Collections* greatly enhance access to primary sources for researchers in International Relations, Law, Public Policy,



Political Science and History. As our undergraduates are increasingly asked to base their original thinking on primary documents, it is very helpful to gather in one online space so much material that was previously scattered about the Web or available only in microform. For example, one colleague describes the **DDRS** as “an essential complement to Foreign Relations of the United States and to the National Security Archive collection.” However, the cost of these collections can be prohibitive even after customer loyalty and bundle discounts. The pricing may give budget managers pause, especially when a library has already purchased some of the original microforms.

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About the Author

Catherine Shreve is a reference librarian at Duke University who also serves as the subject librarian for Public Policy & Political Science. In that role, she acts as liaison; manages the collections for Political Science and Public Policy; and provides reference service, research consultations, and library instruction. She often coordinates with other subject librarians to support transdisciplinary research. Catherine is currently exploring new avenues of outreach and instruction using “Library 2.0” technology.

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GALE DIGITAL COLLECTIONS