



CASE STUDY

ENHANCING YOUR LIBRARY'S DIGITAL RESOURCES: EMPOWERING STUDENTS

A librarian explains the importance of digital resources
in *Gale Reference Complete* to teachers and learners



Michelle Perrott

About:

Michelle Perrott is an Academic Librarian supporting the Faculty of Arts, Science & Technology at the University of Northampton. She helps to design and deliver support for the teaching, learning and research activities of the university faculty. Her library subscribed to the *Gale Reference Complete* package in 2017 and currently has access to all its components, including *Academic OneFile*, *General OneFile*, *InfoTrac Newsstand*, *Gale Literary Sources*, and *Archives Unbound*.



The Resource:

Gale Reference Complete provides libraries with access to the largest available collection of primary and secondary sources from the 13th to the 21st centuries. The comprehensive resource combines over 1,800 eBook editions, including award-winning encyclopedias and directories, over 28,000 periodicals, and 1.5 million items of literary criticism and full text literary works and over 300 archive collections. This large collection of rare primary source content from the vaults of the world's great libraries means that subscribing libraries have access to an abundance of relevant information to enhance their teaching and learning environment. The accessible and high-quality resources cover nearly all disciplines, and the package is offered at an affordable price to suit customer needs. *Gale Reference Complete* empowers users of all levels, from undergraduate students to experienced researchers.



The Challenges:

Students have no shortage of information available online, which does not always come from reliable and credible sources. Michelle explains that “given the proliferation of fake news and the sheer volume of sources, it can be difficult to locate good quality, peer reviewed and evidential sources for assignments and dissertations.” Perhaps for this reason, it is more important than ever that university libraries can provide adequate and reliable resources in a range of areas.

Large numbers of students and researchers all learning simultaneously means that academic resources are in high demand. Gale's digital content is easily accessible at any time from any place, meaning that students don't have to be able to visit the library to use it. As Michelle explains, “for HE libraries, it is crucial to be able to provide timely access to authoritative and comprehensive sources such as *Gale Reference Complete* which are accessible 24/7 from any device.”

Relevance and accuracy of searching within databases can also be a challenge for students, who may find the enormous amount of content daunting. To address this issue and empower researchers, Gale uses superior platforms which allow users to share, save, and download content, including highlights and notes. There are also several useful integrated tools such as Topic Finder, which Michelle says, “encourages our students to think about keywords for their searches and helps them to improve the relevance and accuracy of their searching.”

The choice between available sources can be difficult when it comes to watching the library budget. Michelle's library had looked at other digital resource packages previously, but eventually decided these did not offer similar value for money, since “few packages offer such a range of high quality, relevant and authoritative content at an affordable price” as *Gale Reference Complete*. Michelle explains that they “were very impressed with the range of primary and secondary resources available in the package and the value for money this represented...not only would we be able to offer our staff and students an excellent source of literary information at a competitive price, but would also be able to broaden our resource portfolio for our students across all four faculties.”

Gale Reference Complete supports these aims in that it provides easy access to authoritative, scholarly primary and secondary resources relevant to our teaching and learning”



The Opportunities:

Opportunities to overcome these learning challenges are abundant with the *Gale Reference Complete* package. According to Michelle, this is because it *“offers a very extensive range of primary and secondary sources which benefit staff and students in most research areas and disciplines at undergraduate, postgraduate and academic research levels.”* She also explains that *“these collections are valuable to researchers at all stages. If you need definitions or overviews of topics to get started on your path to understanding or if you need in-depth, scholarly research, searching the Gale collections will enable you to find what you need.”*

The wide array of content available and its value to researchers of all kinds makes the *Gale Reference Complete* package uniquely comprehensive. According to Michelle, ‘the multidisciplinary aspect of the collection is a key factor in the appeal’ of *Gale Reference Complete*. She also mentioned that *“Gale Literary Sources collection is particularly important for our English and Creative writing students and researchers.”*

Michelle also gives examples of where *Gale Primary Sources* have proved very useful to students of certain disciplines. One thing that appealed to the library when assessing the available content is the positive impact these resources would have on students studying humanities subjects such as journalism, media, history and sociology. Specifically, *“our history students find the primary sources available on Jack the Ripper most helpful as this is taught as part of the Crime & Punishment in the 18th and 19th Century history modules.”* These rare primary sources cannot be found elsewhere, and therefore provide students with a unique understanding of historical and cultural events.

Since subscribing to *Gale Reference Complete*, the university have found that the content has been useful in an even wider range of research topics and disciplines than expected. Some other areas of study whose students have particularly benefited from the collection, outlined by Michelle, are fashion, geography, graphic communication, and fine art. Furthermore, Michelle shares *“those studying children’s literature will find the Something About the Author series, which examines the lives and works of authors and illustrators for children and young adults, very helpful... The range of sources provides a depth of contextual information which is important for our art and design students, giving them an understanding of the social, historical and cultural mores in which they are practicing.”*

Finally, as well as empowering student learning *Gale Reference Complete* also offers libraries the opportunity to succeed in their goals. Michelle explains that *“our aim is to provide access to print, online and multimedia resources to support and enhance the teaching and learning experience at the University of Northampton. The University also operates an e-first policy which means we always purchase an electronic version if available and uses an appropriate access model. Gale Reference Complete supports these aims in that it provides easy access to authoritative, scholarly primary and secondary resources relevant to our teaching and learning.”*

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