



STUDENT CASE STUDY
INTUITIVE DIGITAL
RESOURCES CAN TAKE
YOUR RESEARCH TO THE
NEXT LEVEL -
HELPING YOU STAND OUT
FROM THE CROWD.

An undergraduate student explains how students can get the most out of *Gale Reference Complete*.



Lyndsey England

About:

Lyndsey England is an English Literature and History student at Durham University. She is currently in the second year of her degree.



The Resource:

Gale Reference Complete is the largest package of primary and secondary sources available to libraries today. Home to over 13 million pages of historical primary sources from the 13th to the 21st centuries, including over 28,000 periodicals and 1,700 eBook editions, *Gale Reference Complete* offers unprecedented access to almost every research area and discipline. It is the complete resource for users at all academic levels, from undergraduate students to experienced researchers.



The Challenges:

For many undergraduates, using digital primary sources for the first time can be a daunting prospect. How can students select the most appropriate resource for their studies? As Lyndsey explains, “We are often presented with a wealth of resources that we then need to sift through independently to find something useful”.

Students can struggle citing information that they do find, thereby usually making their references less credible. Another challenge facing students is that with the wealth of resources out there, it becomes

very easy for students to come across information on sites such as Wikipedia that have little credibility as a source, rather than accessing databases with reliable information.

By utilising University library search engines and ‘discover’ features however, students can avoid falling into this trap.

According to Lyndsey, more can be done by both librarians and academics to share the value of these resources:

“I think telling students about the resources available and how they could apply to a particular module would be particularly beneficial. I think it would be great to make sure libraries are more informative when it comes to the wide array of sources that Gale has on offer, and how exactly each of them can be accessed”.

Lyndsey went on to explain how students could help each other too, by “showing each other a particularly interesting source they had come across. I know in the past this has sparked people’s interest in what Gale’s digital resources can do for their own academic study. For example, if I were to show early modern history students how to access *Archives Unbound*, they would be far more likely to use it. They would see its immediate value to their studies”.

Once they can identify the most suitable resource for their studies, students must then learn to use them effectively. As Lyndsey explains, “With all of the different sources that pop up with a single search, it can be overwhelming. Likewise, knowing how to cite primary sources specifically can be tricky, especially for first years who have never used primary sources before”.

“I really like Gale Primary Sources, mainly because it is a cross-search platform that gives me access to a large amount of primary sources at once.”



The Opportunities:

Thanks to its straightforward functionality and intuitive learning tools, *Gale Reference Complete* can help students overcome feeling overwhelmed by digital resources, and transform the quality of their work.

As Lyndsey outlined, “Using *Gale Reference Complete* is a great way of narrowing down your own interests and taking hold of your degree, carrying out the research most people had in mind when applying to study history or literature. Using *Gale Reference Complete* gives people an opportunity to potentially show their lecturers something which they themselves have never come across, and that’s a great advantage when you’re writing your essays”.

This is particularly true if the resource contains rare and complete primary source material that can’t be found elsewhere:

“Gale Literary Sources, which I use for English research, gives me access to a lot of interesting literary sources that I wouldn’t come across using other platforms that most students are more familiar with, like JSTOR. Also, I like the fact that Gale allows me to access full eBooks, as most other platforms only offer up journals and articles as opposed to full books”.

As Lyndsey has found with her own research, having easy access points to such a vast range of content helps her to build a comprehensive picture of a particular topic:

“I really like Archives Unbound (which is a part of the Gale Reference Complete package), mainly because it is a cross-search platform that gives me access to a large amount of primary sources at once. When researching and attempting to find documents for my history essays, I love sifting through the broad range of primary sources available as a way to find as much as I can about a particular topic, and it allows me to cross-compare different opinions of the same topic that occurred at the same time”.

What’s more, the resources’ intuitive analytical tools make it easy to identify the most relevant content, even for less experienced users:

“Being able to fully-text search all of the documents, and then use the term cluster and term frequency tools to identify trends, is particularly useful, and really helps me narrow down my searches. I’d recommend this highly to students who are a bit daunted by how many results they will receive on each search. Likewise, the citation tools really help students if they are unsure of how to cite primary sources specifically”.

Ultimately, Lyndsey hopes that more students will make similar use of these resources, stating, “I’d like to spread the word through library targeted talks, and telling my friends about the resources on offer. I would highly recommend these resources to other students”.

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