

2018 Annual List of Best Historical Materials Selected by RUSA's History Section Experts

RUSA History Section Historical Materials Committee

RUSA History Section Historical Materials Committee provides the 2018 Best Historic Materials list. The committee consists of Eileen Bentsen, Baylor University; Steve Knowlton, Princeton University, co-editor; Sue McFadden, Indiana University East, chair, co-editor; Mackenzie Ryan, Texas State; and Amanda J. Wahlmeier, Johnson County Library, Kansas.

Learn more about RUSA's Book and Media Awards at www.ala.org/rusa/awards.

The RUSA/CODESS Historical Section's Historical Materials Committee follows an established method to identify the best materials for the year. The process uses standardized criteria, a broad, national call for nominations, and the work of committee members to review and select from the nominations. The 2018 Best Historical Materials' list is a mix of digital archives, collections, indexes, and print bibliographies that promote the research of unique, rich, and specialized collections. All resources were last reviewed on January 21, 2019.—*Editor*

***African Kingdoms: An Encyclopedia of Empires and Civilizations.* Edited by Saheed Aderinto. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017. 363 pp. \$89 hardcover (ISBN: 9781610695794). E-book also available (9781610695800).**

While its title implies that this work will focus on political history, it is actually (according to its introduction) “a reference book on African civilization before the 1880s.” After a valuable editor’s introduction that lays out important themes in African history, a series of alphabetical entries cover polities ranging in time from the third millennium BCE. (ancient Egypt) to the twentieth century CE (Asante, Buganda, and several others). A selection of primary sources follows. An index, timeline, and glossary are included. In addition to narratives of political and military history for each nation, there is discussion of developments within economic, cultural, and religious life that shaped the history of the kingdoms. Interactions between kingdoms and with European and Arab traders and diplomats are also covered. Each entry includes suggestions for further study. The works are written to be accessible to advanced high school and undergraduate readers. Recommended for school, college, and public libraries.—*Steven Knowlton, Princeton University*

Harvard University. *Colonial North America at Harvard Library.* <http://colonialnorthamerica.library.harvard.edu/spotlight/cna>.

Expanding access to primary source documents through digitization, this collection focuses on archival records in various Harvard University Library collections from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (passing from the Colonial to the Early Republic era of American history). The documents are diverse—wills, inventories, maps, mathematical texts, correspondence, bills of lading, etc.—and the digitization is of very high quality. There are several curated collections that gather various documents around a theme—medicine, material culture, women, the sea, etc. —with a useful introductory essay regarding the information to be found, its application to the theme, and the place of the theme in historical studies. Users may browse the thematic collections or search by keyword (excellent metadata for searching is provided). The viewer is well-designed, with multiple options for manipulating, saving, citing, or sharing the image. This source will be most useful for high school, college, and public libraries.—*Eileen M. Bentsen, Baylor University*

Grossman, Mark. *Constitutional Amendments: Encyclopedia of the People, Procedures, Politics, Primary Documents Relating to the 27 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution*, 2nd ed. Amenia, NY: Grey House, 2017. 2 vols. \$275 hardcover (ISBN: 9781682171769). \$344 e-book (978-1-68217-177-6).

Much of American jurisprudence and political debate centers around the amendments to the United States Constitution, and the interpretations given to their texts. Grossman’s two-volume set, a revision of his 2012 edition, offers vital context for such interpretation. The complete text of each amendment is reproduced, along with timelines of their progress toward ratification, introductory materials that outline the contemporary political questions that motivated the amendments, selections from congressional debates and the opinion pages of newspapers, subsequent Supreme Court cases involving the amendments, capsule biographies of individuals important to the amending process, and social history documents such as advertisements

and commodity prices from the time period of each amendment. An index is included. Any interested citizen will benefit from the information presented here, and it is appropriate for all libraries.—*Steven Knowlton, Princeton University.*

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Holocaust Encyclopedia.” <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/>.

Preserving the artifacts, memories, and history of the Holocaust in terms accessible to students, educators, and policymakers, the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* also aims to develop critical thinking skills and help its users combat Holocaust denial arguments. Oral histories, photographs, maps, and documents provide primary source evidence for personal, research, and classroom use. Context is provided by essays, video interviews with curators describing research into specific artifacts in the collections, and animated maps. The encyclopedia provides keyword searching with optional limiting by content type and language; users can also browse by tags or an A-to-Z table of contents. Accessibility level varies with each item—some videos have transcripts or captions, others have none. The encyclopedia also includes resources for teachers: critical-thinking questions for selected essays, the very accessible essay “How to Identify Reputable Historical Sources,” curriculum guides (on the museum’s page), and more. Valuable for school, college, and public libraries.—*Eileen M. Bentsen, Baylor University*

Digital Scholarship Lab, University of Richmond. *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America.* <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/>.

Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America is the product of the University of Richmond’s Digital Scholarship Lab, with contributions from the University of Maryland, Virginia Tech, and Johns Hopkins University. The site provides access to the Depression-era records of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) that highlight the practice of redlining in the real estate industry. The HOLC maps outline areas deemed a secure financial investment in green, declining areas in yellow, and areas of increased financial risk in red. However, their reasoning for these rankings often had a racist base that resulted in neighborhoods with large numbers of people of color being more likely to receive a red outline. The information displayed on the site helps users interpret redlining’s impact on urban neighborhoods and the current economic conditions of their city. Users can interact with these records by viewing various cities, selecting different neighborhoods within those cities, and filtering areas based on HOLC’s grading system. The site opens with instructions on viewing the materials and downloading the images. Users can zoom in on their current city or find information for other areas using the search function. The navigation bar lists an introduction, detailing the background of the HOLC’s grading system and information on the archival process; a bibliography and bibliographical note with a comprehensive listing of studies about HOLC’s system, segregation, and discrimination; an “About” section with information on the contributors to the site; and a “Contact Us” page. The site can be used by the average public library patron, but would most benefit academic researchers. This unique site gives a convenient, accessible place to access information only found using resources housed in multiple locations.—*Amanda Wahlmeier, Johnson County Library, Shawnee Mission, Kansas*

Not Even Past: The Public Archive: Doing History Online and In Public. <https://notevenpast.org/the-public-archive/>.

The *Not Even Past* website includes blogs, reviews on historical materials from all over the world, *The Public Archive: Doing History Online and In Public* collection of student works, and archived episodes of the podcast *15-Minute History*. The website is edited by Professor Joan Neuberger, Professor of History at the University Of Texas (UT), Austin. This random assortment of archived materials showcases work developed by UT graduate students and faculty. Graduate students in a Public and Digital History Seminar develop archives for *The Public Archive: Doing History Online and In Public*. These works were previously not digitized and the students select the topics with the assistance of UT librarians. Most collections represent a physical archive on the UT campus. As Neuberger notes, “Each website includes digitized archival documents, 2 or more blog-essays to make the archival material accessible and provide historical context for them, and two lesson plans for ideas about how to teach related subjects using these documents.” The Department of History at UT Austin provides the website and organizational support. The site is composed of collections relevant to both world and US history; for example, *The Road to Sesame Street* and *Mercenary Monks*. The blogs, lesson plans, and digitized information provide pieces to the historical puzzle. Podcasts and search functions add to the research opportunities. Additional lists of resources connect these vignettes of history to a solid historiographical foundation. This is a project that enlightens viewers through content and context. Another archive-blog, *Guards and Pickets: The Paperwork of Slavery*, is an example of an emotional and exemplary view of history. The site remains active with plans to add historical materials into the future. It is recommended for students in grades 6–12, undergraduate students, and individuals interested in wide-ranging historical content.—*Sue McFadden, Indiana University East*

Van der Vieren, Monica. *On the Trail of the North American Buffalo.* <https://thebuffalotrail.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=1806faa8349048c891576d4a83a7a8ac>.

On the Trail of the North American Buffalo is a website with content primarily written by Monica Van der Vieren with assistance from Shaun O’Neil and input from many other historians and historical institutions. The site provides a chronological timeline of the North American buffalo, or bison, starting with the Ice Age 1.8 million years ago. It also gives information on other elements of natural history, such as ice sheets, tectonic plate shifts, grasslands, and prairie ecology. Users scroll through the timeline

interspersed with primary sources including photographs, videos, and maps related to the buffalo and its habitat. Unfortunately, there is no search function, but topic areas such as arrival of the buffalo, the great slaughter of the nineteenth century, and new trails are listed at the top of the site so users can navigate through the timeline without endless scrolling. The site provides a comprehensive look at a natural history topic in an engaging and appealing format and ends with an extensive bibliography that can guide the user to more information on any given aspect of the buffalo's life. The information is best suited for the average public library patron or high school level researcher.—*Amanda Wahlmeier, Johnson County Library, Shawnee Mission, Kansas*

***Reforming America: A Thematic Encyclopedia and Document Collection of the Progressive Era.* Edited by Jeffrey A. Johnson. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017. 2 vols. \$189 hardcover (ISBN: 9781440837203). E-book also available (9781440837210).**

The Progressive Era was a time of seeming contradiction, as reforms that expanded individual rights and political reform ran into movements to entrench segregation, promote eugenics, and mechanize the workplace. As such, current students of history may find it challenging to understand historical actors and events of the period without appropriate contextual information, which *Reforming America* strives to provide. It is organized thematically (Social and Political Life; Work and Economic Life; Cultural and Religious Life; Science, Literature, and the Arts; Sports and Popular Culture), with each section containing short alphabetized entries, followed by a selection of primary sources. Each entry includes suggestions for further reading, and the bibliographic essay and timeline further enhance its usefulness. An index is included. It is most appropriate for school and public libraries.—*Steven Knowlton, Princeton University*

***Bookheim, Louis W. Reports of U.S. Presidential Commissions and Other Advisory Bodies: A Bibliographic Listing, updated ed.* Getzville, NY: Hein, 2017. 572 pp. \$275 hardcover and online package (ISBN: 9780837740188).**

From the time of Andrew Jackson, presidents have appointed special commissions to deal with matters that fall outside of the purview of congressional committees or departments of the executive branch. Often, these commissions have an investigatory function and their reports prove to be of great value by gathering together information that would otherwise be scattered; in all cases, their reports are a primary source of use to historians, political scientists, economists, and other scholars. However, the reports are not necessarily included in the Public Papers of the Presidents, nor in the Weekly Compilation of the Presidential Documents. Bookheim has performed the valuable service of locating publication information for nearly all of the commissions' reports (some are classified), and plans to continue to add new entries to the online version of the book. Where reports are found in the Congressional Serial Set, Bookheim provides citations; otherwise, he offers full title entries, along with, as relevant, SuDoc numbers, OCLC record numbers, or archival locations. Researchers should, with a quick reference to the entry and access to WorldCat, be able to immediately identify a library or archive that holds a given report. The volume is indexed by presidential administration and by commission name. This volume is especially appropriate for law libraries and research libraries.—*Steven Knowlton, Princeton University*

***Women in American History: A Social, Political, and Cultural Encyclopedia and Document Collection.* Edited by Peg A. Lamphier and Rosanne Welch. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017. 4 vols. \$415 hardcover (ISBN: 9781610696029). E-book also available (9781610636036).**

The subtitle of this encyclopedia is indicative of its ambitious scope. The work encompasses not only capsule biographies of important historical figures, but also discussions of law, cultural mores, economics, and political movements as factors in women's lives throughout American history. Each volume covers a separate time period, and within the time period presents a historical overview, numerous alphabetical entries interspersed with occasional primary sources, a thematic issues essay, and a bibliography. In addition, each entry includes suggestions for further reading. Throughout the work, the editors have ensured that the emphasis upon providing social and legal context for the discussion within any entry is maintained, and this gives the reader a better sense of the work of historians than do many historical encyclopedias. Any researcher beginning with this volume will be well served in framing a research question appropriate to the era and the field of women's history. The entire work is thoroughly indexed. Appropriate for all libraries, but especially for public and school libraries.—*Steven Knowlton, Princeton University*

British Library, *World War One*. <https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one>

The British Library brings together materials from various institutions across Europe in this comprehensive website focusing on Europe in World War I. The website features more than 500 items including photographs, videos, diaries, books, cartoons, and other types of materials that provide evidence about the ways that Europeans experienced the war on both sides of the conflict. Users can explore materials by theme, search using keywords, and filter collections by years, languages, creators, and formats. In addition to the digitized collections, the website also features articles written by historical experts, interviews, and teaching resources with lesson plans designed for middle and high school students. This resource is suitable for any type of library and would be helpful for researchers of any skill level interested in World War I as well as middle school and high school teachers interested in teaching with primary resources.—*Mackenzie Ryan, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas*

WW1—The Definitive Collection, from British

Pathé. <https://www.britishpathe.com/workspaces/page/ww1-the-definitive-collection>

British Pathé, a newsreel and documentary production company, holds an extensive collection of archival film footage from World War I. Now available online, the footage provides a rare glimpse into various aspects of life during the Great War. The films in this collection are international in scope and organized into categories such as political leaders including President Woodrow Wilson and Tsar Nicholas II, battles and types of warfare, and experiences of civilians during and after the war. Users can also search for films by keyword; the results are drawn not only from the World War I collection but also the entire catalog of British Pathé's film archives. Each film includes a short summary and description with options to view the films in full screen or as individual stills. The website is an excellent source for researchers of any level interested in primary source materials on World War I and may be of particular interest to those in academic and research libraries.—*Mackenzie Ryan, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas*

Refbacs

- There are currently no refbacs.