

---

# Best Historical Materials

## RUSA History Section Historical Materials Committee

*RUSA History Section Historical Materials Committee consists of Sue McFadden, chair; Steven A. Knowlton, Eileen Bentsen, and Leigh-Anne Yacovelli.*

The RUSA History 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 2016 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 December 9, 2016.

*Bibliography of the East India Company. Contemporary Printed Sources, 1786–1858, Catherine Pickett*

This book continues Pickett's work, first published in 2011 as *Bibliography of the East India Company: Books, Pamphlets and Other Materials Printed between 1600 and 1785*. The second volume covers the years between the subordination of the Company to the Crown and the disestablishment of the Company after the Indian Rebellion. It offers not merely a list of published works, but also includes a preface for each year that is covered. The prefaces themselves offer a chronology and contextualization of events in the history of the Company for each year. The bibliography covers monographs written during the period but also includes ephemera such as price lists and cargo manifests. Although individual entries are not annotated (except to add caption titles, which often explain the contents of a book), the bibliography is indexed by author, title, and subject.—Steven A. Knowlton, Princeton University

CALISPHERE, University of California Libraries, developed and maintained by the California Digital Library (<https://calisphere.org>)

Provides a central location to access a rich and diverse variety of digital collections on California. The site is hosted by the University of California system, but includes many state-wide partners: museums, public and special libraries, and archives. Content includes visual, textual, and audio materials. A single search box on the homepage searches across all collections. The result list includes limiting facets by type of item (moving image, text, etc.), decade, contributing institution, or specific collection. Includes a browse feature by collection or by exhibition. The interface is user-friendly and attractive, the digitization quality is excellent, and the material covers topics from all subject areas (history, literature, race relations, diversity, economic growth, performing and visual arts, architecture, etc.). Each entry includes a rights statement so that the end user is aware of

copyright ownership and/or restrictions.—*Eileen Bentsen, Baylor University*

Directory of American Tool and Machinery Patents (DATAMP), DATAMP is funded by the Old Woodworking Machines website ([www.datamp.org](http://www.datamp.org))

Patents aren't just for engineers anymore—they are an excellent primary source for cultural, scientific, and community history. Historical patent research has long been hampered by its arcane indexing system, with patents before 1976 indexed only by date and USPTO assigned classification codes. Historians are more likely to look for connections via the name or location of the inventor. Unfortunately OCR files in Google Patents are often unable to read full text of the older documents accurately. The open-access DATAMP database offers an extremely valuable tool for those tracking patented machines and tools, including household, agricultural, industrial, structures, and hand tools.

This database supplements information in the patent record: names and locations of manufacturers, access to over 1300 non-US historic patents, Confederate States of America patents, and patents destroyed in fires at the USPTO. Russ Allen and his team of dedicated volunteers from antique tool and machinery circles (including retired York, NE librarian and library director Stan Shulz) have made this database easy to browse or search. For example, information about Albert W. Grey's Patent No. 2,833 (1842) for an "Endless-Chain Horse-Power" and 15,693 (1856) for a Link of Horse-Powers were findable through inventor, the title, the city, state, manufacturer, as well as the machine's type (propulsion and energy) and category (animal powered apparatus) chosen from dropdown menus. Non-specialists can peruse related historical tools and machines. In addition to accessing official USPTO records, some results include links to supplemental information.—*Barbara J. Hampton, USPTO PTRC Representative and Librarian (retired)*

Human Rights Studies Online, Alexander Street Press (<http://alexanderstreet.com/products/human-rights-studies-online>)

This database collects primary and secondary sources in text and media for many genocidal events, including Armenia, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, and Darfur. It collects sources that would otherwise be scattered throughout government and United Nations documents collections, archives, and periodicals. In addition to full-text searching, the content is indexed by subject, theme, discipline, and other fields. Types of documents included range from witness testimonies and court documents to videotaped documentaries and interviews. Subscription required.—*Steven A. Knowlton, Princeton University*

*In the Lands of the Romanovs: An Annotated Bibliography of First-Hand English-Language Accounts of the Russian Empire (1613–1917)*, Anthony Cross

This comprehensive bibliography features thorough notations of each entry, along with lengthy introductory sections

to contextualize the material. Color illustrations supplement the text. Cross has added more than six hundred entries to the most recent bibliography on the topic, published in 1968. In addition to the print volume, an online edition is offered as an "open source" text to which readers can contribute.

The notations offer much original research into the biographies of authors whose works are included, making this an important reference work in its own right as well as the most complete bibliography in its field. By offering the extensive introductory material in each section along with information about each of the authors, Cross effectively presents a history of relations between the English-speaking world and the Russian Empire. This work offers not only a list of works published in its field, but a survey of the interests and attitudes of Western writers visiting Russia in the period. Also available to be read online for free at [www.openbookpublishers.com/product/268/in-the-lands-of-the-romanovs--an-annotated-bibliography-of-first-hand--english-language-accounts-of-the-russian-empire--1613-1917](http://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/268/in-the-lands-of-the-romanovs--an-annotated-bibliography-of-first-hand--english-language-accounts-of-the-russian-empire--1613-1917)—*Steven A. Knowlton, Princeton University*

IsisCB Explore (<http://data.isiscb.org/>)

IsisCB Explore is an open access database that provides citation and abstract information about the history of science. A companion database, IsisCB Cumulative, at <http://cumulative.isiscb.org/>, provides the cumulative work and digitizes the Isis print index, covering 1913 to 1975. IsisCB Explore extends to the content through the current date. It is especially helpful for historians of science, medicine, and technology, as its core dataset comes from the Isis bibliography with forty years of content.—*Nickoal L. Eichmann-Kalwara, Mississippi State University/University of Colorado, Boulder*

Lipad ([www.lipad.ca/](http://www.lipad.ca/))

Lipad is a full-text searchable database of the transcripts of the Parliament of Canada from 1901 to the present. It is an open source, freely accessible resource. The website was launched April 2016. In 2013, a group of political scientists, computer scientists, and historians teamed up at the University of Toronto and a key output of this collaboration is the first machine-readable and fully searchable historical Hansard (transcript of Canada's Parliament). This data has been linked to various biographical properties of parliamentarians, including their party and gender. The interface is user friendly, presenting the debates in a script format and often including the speaker's picture—rather than a digitized scan of the original text as has been traditionally available.—*Katie Cuyler, University of Alberta*

*Slavery in America: History, Culture, and Law*, William S. Hein (<http://home.heinonline.org/slavery>)

The HeinOnline database, *Slavery in America and the World: History, Culture & Law* provides access to over 1,150 full-text titles, including fifteen periodical titles. The included resources provide primary and period works on the

## FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

topic of slavery. The primary resources include: memoirs, slave codes, judicial cases, and court records. Most of the materials are in English, with a few being in French. Additionally, the resource includes: bibliographies, monographs, topic surveys, reports, and scholarly articles are available from HeinOnline. The resource provides access to several collections, including publications from UNC Press Publications and an expansive slavery collection owned by the Buffalo Erie County Public Library. Individuals may freely register and search the collection, which is also available by subscription.

The search interface includes the Slavery Quick Finder Tool. This resource provides slavery information from various collections. HeinOnline offers tutorials, widgets, and webinars to assist searchers independent of librarian. The subscription may be branded for the local provider of the access to HeinOnline.

Publication dates for materials in the collection range from 1735 to 2015. The included information documents the beginnings of the Atlantic slave trade, describes slavery, and provides analysis of the attributes of the US Civil War. Materials from the aftermath of slavery in the United States reminds the researcher that the effects and characteristics of institutional slavery did not dissipate without conflict into the twentieth century.—*Sue McFadden, Indiana University East*

*The Persian Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia*, Mehrdad Kia ([www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOGreenwood/product.aspx?pc=A4090C](http://www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOGreenwood/product.aspx?pc=A4090C))

This is the first reference source in English that focuses exclusively on ancient Iran during the period of its great empires before the arrival of Islam from 700 BCE to 651 CE. Kia, a professor of history at the University of Montana, introduces the work with a historical overview that provides readers with perspective on the key people and events of the major empires and dynasties of Persia. The main empires were Medes, Achaemenids, Seleucids, Arsacids (Parthians), and Sasanians. Kia emphasizes ancient Iran's geographic expanse, the diversity of peoples, languages, and cultures, and the forces of change brought on by military conquests and administrative structures. There are 241 essays ranging from a paragraph to several pages arranged by themes, such as ancient cities and archaeological sites, cultures, languages, kings and queens of dynasties, peoples, and religions. Using both secondary and primary sources, and often citing *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Kia offers a source that will appeal to a broad audience that includes high school and college

students and general readers seeking basic narrative and descriptive information accompanied by references for further reading. The work also has selected primary source texts, a chronology of ancient Iran, and general bibliography.—*David Lincove, Ohio State University Libraries*

Umbra Search, Givens Collection of African American Literature at the University of Minnesota Libraries' Archives and Special Collections, with Penumbra Theatre Company ([www.umbrasearch.org](http://www.umbrasearch.org))

Umbra Search began as a theater archive, *The African American Theater History Project*, from the University of Minnesota. In 2014 the Institute of Museum and Library Services, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the Council on Library and Information Resources funded the project to transition to the Umbra Search for African American History. The aggregated search tool provides access to archival records from more than one thousand libraries. According to the about page, the title, Umbra, is derived from "the Umbra Society of the early 1960s, a renegade group of Black writers and poets who helped create the Black Arts Movement."

Umbra Search offers statistics since mid-2015 that allows partner-institutions to measure the traffic from the Umbra tool. The resource offers a search widget and logo linking the tool. There are other databases that provide African American history resources, both free and fee-based that also link to multiple archival resources for the topic. Umbra, offers the combination of a search and a linking tool that displays the content in the Umbra-environment or linked to the native archive.

The search functionality of Umbra is easy to use and provides facets on the left side of the screen for more specificity, a list of resource-items identified by the search, ways to display the list graphically, and options to display the organization of the resource-items' list. Each record item includes an image, linked title, keywords, and link to the institution of the record. An example search for "Martin Luther King Jr." found 4,257 records. Umbra also identified special search topics such as "the Center for Non-Violent Social Change." In looking at the individual resource-item, the linked title shows specific information about the item record and includes: description, linked keywords/metatags, related links, a link to view the original record, and other bibliographic data. Additionally, the record displays the contributor and institution that harvested the record. The image for the record links to the provider institution's record for more information.—*Sue McFadden, Indiana University East*