Exploring Online Tools for
Ship and Maritime History Research

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Overview: This webinar outline highlights links that will be used during the session. The session will discuss these tools and provide more information about them and their effective use.

1. How does vessel research impact genealogy? You can learn about your ancestor, without learning about your ancestor! Examples:
   a. Naval service records – if you know what vessel they were on and when, then a history of that vessel will tell you about their experiences
   b. Primary documents, like logbooks, might mention them or will provide additional insights into experiences on board
      i. US Navy Deck Logs, in the US National Archives
      ii. UK Royal Navy log books, in the UK National Archives
   c. Secondary histories
      i. DANFS – Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (Ship Histories provides additional content)
      ii. Numerous published histories, discoverable through public catalogs
   d. Passenger lists, even when you already know your ancestors' ships, may offer more information about family members on board
   e. Personal records from immigrant voyages might be discoverable
      i. WorldCat guides you to books *by* or *about* ships, albeit clumsily

2. Using ShipIndex.org – a guide to books, magazines, websites, databases, and more, that mention specific vessels – the largest collection of vessel names, anywhere
   a. Free database contains over 150,000 citations
      i. Includes books, logbooks, cruise books, ephemera, etc., from WorldCat.org
      ii. Includes ships indexed in many classic texts in maritime history, like Starbuck's *History of the American Whale Fishery*, Fairburn's *Merchant Sail*, Matthews' *American Merchant Ships, 1850-1900*, Vols 1-50 of *American Neptune*, Albion's *Square-Riggers on Schedule*, multiple titles by Lubbock, Chappelle, Greenhill, Cutler, and more
   b. Subscription database contains over 3.8 <u>million</u> citations, from over 1200 resources
      i. Hundreds of online databases and collections that one wouldn't find otherwise; many hundreds of titles that aren't freely digitized
      ii. Inexpensive; will save you many hours of searching

    c. Vessel differentiation, for the many different ships with the same name!
        i. Also brings together different names for the same ship
        ii. Examples: *Wasp*, *Resolute*, etc.
        iii. We use a Wikidata identifier, so can be used/predicted by anyone
    d. Advanced searching, which allows for much more careful work
        i. Note expanded ship names, searching by start or end of vessel name, etc
            1. See the help page!
    e. Content submitted by the public, to expand information about specific vessels
        i. For example, RSS Discovery – but this is brand-new, so limited use so far
    f. Locating ships in *unindexed data* – reviewing large sets of data, like newspapers, for mentions of ships
        i. How do you find a ship named "Equator" or "Cleveland" or "Margaret" among millions of words in newspapers?
        ii. Demo of our proof-of-concept: *Mooltan*, *Palikonda*, *Orion*, *Sheffield*, etc.

3. Other tools & resources for vessel research
    a. Other ship registers online, such as:
        i. Lloyd's Register of Ships Online (British, 1764-1998)
        ii. Australian Maritime Safety Authority registry (Australian, current)
        iii. Ship Registers of New Bedford, Massachusetts (in Internet Archive, 1796-1850)
    b. Dictionary-style books, where ships are all in alphabetical order – most not yet included in ShipIndex.org
    c. Searching in Google or other search engines
        i. Add the type of vessel to narrow down the search

4. You've found a citation; what next?
    a. In the US, use WorldCat.org, but with many limitations and concerns – it gets a bit worse with every new release; you now need to create an account to see locations
        i. Use this ShipIndex blog post to locate manuscripts via NUCMC, if you find an entry without any location given
    b. For Canadian holdings, visit Voilà, but it's hosted by WorldCat so it displays many similar problems in utility
    c. Search the Jisc Union Catalog – holdings of 200+ UK & Irish libraries
    d. For Australian holdings, search Trove, and limit search to "Books & Libraries"

5. Searching for older newspapers online
    a. See Wikipedia's list of digitized newspapers (also divided by state)
    b. See Chronicling America, for over 21 million pages of newspaper content
        i. Much content has recently been re-OCR'd, with great improvements
    c. Check out the very excellent California Digital Newspaper Collection
    d. For UK content, see Connected Histories: British Newspapers, 1600-1900, or British Newspaper Archive, but not free to individual researchers (free to UK higher ed)

6. Searching subscription databases
    a. Quality transcriptions and better searching make these far superior to most free collections; examples include:

       i.   ProQuest: many major historical newspapers; they have fully transcribed these papers, making the databases quite expensive
      ii.   Newsbank: newspapers from smaller cities
     iii.   History Commons: colonial, Civil War, etc. newspaper collections
     iv.   Gale: Times Digital Archive, 19th c. British newspapers,
      v.   (Newspapers.com offers subscriptions to individuals)
     vi.   See Cornell's LibGuide on newspaper sources for more suggestions

   b. To search, visit your large local academic library – most will allow you to use the databases even if you're not affiliated with them, but call first, just to be sure

7. Exploring academic LibGuides and specialized libraries

   a. Subject directories created by experts, such as state history, maritime history, etc.

   b. Special libraries like Hull History Centre, or Caird Library at NMM, other maritime museums

8. Last tip: Use discovery layers

   a. Discovery layers: sort of like Google for libraries; they allow a researcher to search many databases all at once

   b. Use the discovery layer from the vendor with more historical newspapers content

   c. Every academic library has a discovery layer; but implementations always vary
       i.   In many, anyone can view, but cannot access, search results
      ii.   Again, you *won't* be able to access the actual article

   d. Easiest solution: use Princeton's discovery layer, then customize – after a search, find "Articles+", then "View and refine results", then select "Newspaper article" under "Content Type", and/or select "Include citation-only items"

   e. Or use Yale's discovery layer, then customize – after a search, scroll down to "Newspaper Articles" on the left, then "Refine Your Search": click the box under "Publication Date", then change the dates, then "Refine", to search early content

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