



Newspapers are an important resource for doing historical research. Often called the “first rough draft of history”, newspapers can provide unique perspectives with contemporary accounts of people and events from the past that are unavailable via other resources. Unfortunately, unlike other periodicals, there are no comprehensive historical indexes such as the *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* or *Poole's Index* that cover multiple newspaper titles over long periods of time. Major newspapers generally have indexing that goes back no further than the 1970's if they are indexed at all, and most newspapers actually have no indexing.

So what does this lack of indexing mean for the researcher? It means that alternative strategies for locating information within these newspapers are required. Generally the most effective method is to:

1. Use secondary sources first to pinpoint date ranges to consider when accessing the newspaper(s). This might include books, print periodical indexes, topical encyclopedias, article databases/indexes such as *America: History and Life* or *Historical Abstracts*, Internet sites or other resources that can provide background information on the topic being researched.
2. If relevant to the type of research being done, identify what newspapers existed during the time period in the geographic location being researched. The United States Newspaper Program Website at <http://www.neh.gov/projects/usnp.html> provides a good starting point for this step. Union lists, bibliographies and directories can be useful for identifying newspapers published in a particular location during a specific time period, or for identifying publication information for specific types of newspapers (i.e. African-American newspapers, etc.).
3. Determine whether the UF Libraries own the microfilm for the newspaper(s) by using the online catalog at <http://uf.aleph.fcla.edu/F> (note: specify the journals/serials sub-catalog).

Additional strategies:

In many instances a local library, genealogical society or historical society near where the newspaper is/was published may provide indexing for local newspapers so check that as a possible indexing source.

There are many newspaper digitization projects currently underway that offer searchable full text of historic newspapers. The U.S. Newspaper Program (see #2 above) or an Internet search can often be useful for identifying the newspapers included in these projects.

Although the majority of historical newspapers are still available only on microfilm, there are a growing number of online databases providing either indexing or full text access. The following subscription databases are available through the UF Libraries and are accessible by using the “Database Locator” at <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/locator.html>.

African-American Newspapers: The 19th Century

Indexes and full text of the major African-American newspapers published in the United States during the 19th century, including Freedom's Journal, The Colored American, The North Star, The National Era, The Provincial Freeman, Frederick Douglass Paper and The Christian Recorder.

Alternative Press Index Archive (Firstsearch)

Includes indexing of alternative, radical and left newspapers beginning in 1969.

ProQuest Historical Newspapers

Includes New York Times (1851-2001); Wall Street Journal (1889-1986); Washington Post (1877-1988); and Christian Science Monitor (1908-1991). Digital reproductions of every page from every issue, cover to cover, in downloadable PDF files.

The Times (London) Digital Archive

The complete digital edition of The Times (London). The entire newspaper is captured, with all articles, advertisements and illustrations/photos. Coverage from 1785-1985.

19th Century Masterfile

Includes New York Times Index (1863-1905), New York Daily Tribune Index (1875-1906), Palmers Index to the Times (London) (1880-1890), and Index to the Oregon Spectator (1846-1854).

For additional information regarding using newspapers for historical research contact Pat Reakes (pir@uflib.ufl.edu) or Shelley Arlen (shelarl@uflib.ufl.edu).