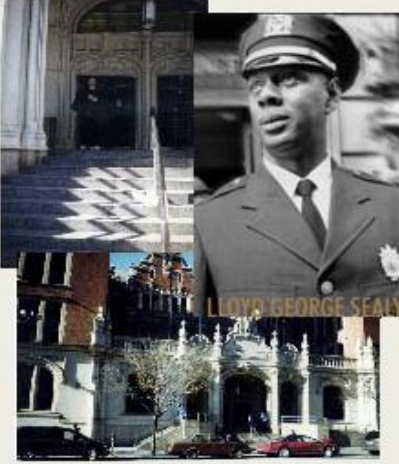


◦ SPRING | ◦ 2008



# *Classified Information* the Lloyd Sealy

THE GATEWAY TO THE WORLD OF CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE AND RELATED INFORMATION

*library*  
*Newsletter*

## *From the Desk of the Chief Librarian*



*Charles Ponzi's mugshot*

Who hasn't heard of the Ponzi scheme? In 1919-1920, Charles Ponzi of Massachusetts set up an investment fraud that would become eponymous. Similar to a pyramid scheme, but with several important differences, Ponzi concocted an apparent sophisticated arbitrage that involved international postal reply coupons that could be redeemed with stamps from other countries. The profit came in the difference in currency rates. Ponzi, however, told investors these coupons would be redeemed in 90 days with a 40 per cent return. The early lucky investors actually received a 50 per cent profit and then they promptly threw their money back into the scheme, while publicizing the windfall to others. The success of the swindle relied on getting more and more people to cough up money to pay the earlier investors. Eventually Ponzi couldn't buy enough coupons, he was exposed, became insolvent, pleaded guilty to mail fraud, and then did time in both federal and state prisons. In between prison sentences, he swindled people in real estate deals in Florida (the legendary swampland purchases). He eventually died penniless in Brazil in 1949.

Ponzi's life story has now become very relevant to John Jay. The Sealy Library recently acquired one of the most significant collections on Frauds and Swindles ever gathered by one collector. Not only is there almost every edition of books on confidence games and other frauds, but numerous unique items, including an unpublished manuscript biography of Ponzi by his press agent William H. McMasters, who actually helped expose him in a *Boston Post* article in August 1920. We have yet to unpack most of this 2,200 piece collection, so it won't be open to researchers until at least late 2009. But it once again illustrates the richness of the research resources the Sealy Library holds, and also the importance of primary sources, as well as printed sources. Once we have this collection catalogued we will announce its opening.

*- Larry Sullivan*



JOHN JAY COLLEGE  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## <sup>2</sup> Faculty Publications & News

### Scholarly activities of library faculty

**Dean Larry Sullivan** taught a four-day seminar on Elite Deviance to government officials at St. John's College in Belize City, Belize in March. He also gave a lecture on Community Justice at the National Police Academy in Belmopan, Belize on March 12. He presented the paper, "Family Values and Domestic Violence: The Polish Paradigm," at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in Cincinnati in March. His review essay of *The Encyclopedia of the Library of Congress* appeared in the April issue of *Library Quarterly*.

**Professor Janice Dunham** wrote two book reviews:

*World Cultural Leaders of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Grey House, 2007), reviewed in *Library Journal*, April 2008.

*International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Macmillan, 2008), reviewed in the March 1, 2008 issue of *Library Journal*.

**Professor Ellen Belcher** presented several papers recently. On February 21, she presented a lecture at the Columbia University Center for Archaeology entitled "Embodying the Halaf: Prehistoric Figurines from Northern Mesopotamia." On March 1 she presented a paper at the annual conference of the British Association of Near Eastern Archaeologists in Liverpool, UK entitled "Interpreting Halaf Figurines: Empirical Proposals." On March 4, she presented a paper at the Sixth International Conference on Chipped and Ground Stone Tools of the Fertile Crescent in Manchester, UK entitled "The Halaf Beads and Pendants from Domuztepe (Kahramanmaraş, Turkey): Technological and Reductive Strategies." On March 25 she presented a lecture to the Northern New Jersey chapter of the American Archaeological Institute of America in Montclair, NJ entitled "Death and Life in Anatolia: The Prehistoric Settlement of Domuztepe."

**Professor Kathleen Collins** presented a paper, "Stirrings: Early Cookery Broadcasting in the U.S." at "*Feast!*" An interdisciplinary conference on food in text and image, held by the National Institute for Excellence in the Creative Industries, University of Wales, Bangor, Wales, in November 2007. She also reviewed the *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* edited by Stephen L. Vaughn in the March 15, 2008 issue of *Library Journal*.

**Professors Ellen Belcher and Ellen Sexton's** article "Digitising criminals: Web delivery of a century on the cheap" will be published in *OCLC Systems & Services* 24(2).

**-Compiled by Austin Duffy**

## Faculty Favorites

### Wherein faculty share a favorite book or film with the rest of us...

**Adam Berlin**

English Department and an Editor of the new *J Journal*. *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway (1926). There are a few books I reread every few years; that's how I know they're my favorite books. And the best of these books stay surprising every time. I may know the plot, but the characters show me different angles – about themselves and about myself – with each new read. Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* is the ultimate unrequited love story between Jake Barnes, a soldier who suffered the worst war wound a man can suffer, and a woman named Lady Brett, who wants to love him, but can't completely. From the streets of Paris to the bullring in Pamplona, these two lovers who will never make love rely on each other to pass the time in post-World War I Europe. When a handsome bullfighter enters their lives, their fragile connection is tested. Hemingway's novel was written 80 years ago but it is truly contemporary. Jake and Brett's complicated relationship in a damaged world could just as easily be set in post 9/11 New York. And Jake's final line "Isn't it pretty to think so" is perhaps the saddest, most honest line in literature.

**Gail Garfield**, Sociology Department.

*The Road*, a novel by Cormac McCarthy (2006) and the forthcoming film directed by John Hillcoat with star Charlize Theron (2008). This is a great story for thinking about end possibilities for all humans. The larger story is about mass destruction and its consequences; the smaller story within it is about the small, complex, struggling relationship between a father and his son as they are tested to extremes.

**- Compiled by Janice Dunham**

## J Journal Arrives!

**Adam Berlin and Jeffrey Heiman**, members of the English Department, have founded a new journal at John Jay College. *J Journal* will feature fiction, poetry, memoir and first-person narrative about crime, criminal justice, law and law enforcement. There are many scholarly criminal justice journals, but according to Berlin and Heiman, this is the first creative journal with a justice theme. The inaugural issue, which comes out this May, contains work by lawyers, police officers, inmates and award-winning writers.

The two English professors are writers themselves, but this is their first time working as editors. They read through hundreds of manuscripts from outside the college, finally winnowing the pile down to 26 pieces of quality writing on the justice issue. The editors look forward to sharing *J Journal* with our college community. As fledgling editors, Berlin and Heiman hope that faculty and staff might help to get the word out about *J Journal* and build a subscription base. Contacts, listservs and publicity suggestions would be most welcome. Please contact the editors at [jjournal@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:jjournal@jjay.cuny.edu)

# The Oral History of Criminal Justice

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Over the past two and a half years, Lloyd Sealy Library has been home to a new project: the Oral History of Criminal Justice. The purpose is to engage leaders in the field – prosecutors, elected officials, writers, and law enforcement personnel – in discussions about their own background and training, their experience, and their thoughts on major issues. To date, we have completed 21 interviews with 13 individuals, including former Mayor Ed Koch, former United States Attorney Whitney North Seymour, Jr., the sitting district attorneys of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens, and Robert Gangi of The Correctional Association.

Each interview is recorded on audio cassette and then transcribed. The transcripts are then edited for accuracy and style. An oral history interview is not a deposition, where each word must remain as originally recorded on tape. The idea is for the interviewee to present the story in his or her own way. In most cases, it will be the transcript that researchers will consult, not the tape, so it is appropriate for the words to be edited for clarity.

Almost without exception, the interviews provide no new or startling information. After all, public figures are already on the record on many of these issues. At the same time, it is certainly revealing to hear a district attorney discuss the question of whether drugs ought to be decriminalized, or how the Rockefeller Drug laws ought to be reformed, or how their thinking on capital punishment evolved. Mayor Koch discussed how fighting crime became the top priority of his first administration, even as the city was on the brink of bankruptcy. And it is always intriguing to discuss cases that once dominated the newspapers and generated enormous controversy, only to fade from public memory over time.

We expect these interviews to be of great interest to students at John Jay and researchers in the fields of criminal justice and New York City affairs. By next year the transcripts will become available in Special Collections.

- Jeffrey Kroessler

## Black History Month Exhibit

The Lloyd George Sealy Library celebrated Black History Month with exhibits in the foyer of the first floor of the library. The exhibits, which are still on display, include books, a sculpture, and material from the Library's special collection and the personal collection of Professor Larry Sullivan, Chief Librarian.

The large glass exhibit case in the wall features two photographs of an African-American motorcycle policeman, untitled, with the identification number 234 PD NYC on the motorcycle—a unique item from the special collection archives.

The case also features *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *Hustler!—The Autobiography of a Thief*. Both are first editions in dust jackets and were lent by Professor Sullivan. Other books from Professor Sullivan are *Who Took the Weight? Black Voices from Norfolk Prison*, *If They Come in the Morning* by Angela Y. Davis, *Prisoner Aboard the S.S. Beagle*, and *The Truth About Rastafarians*.

The standing circular exhibit case includes an African sculpture of a woman's head, from Gabon, which was lent by a John Jay alumna, and a copy of *The Man from Scottsboro* by Professor Kwando M. Kinshasa (African American Studies), which has an introduction by the late Haywood Burns, former University Law Professor and Dean of the CUNY School of Law.

- Marvie Brooks

## Digital Old Books from the Universities of Strasbourg

Those of us that work with rare and unique primary materials are used to travelling long distances to sit in museum and library study rooms to conduct our research. Recently digitization offers digital copies with which we can begin 'reading' our objects remotely. While nothing can replace study of the original object for many purposes, library digitization efforts now offer thousands of 'digital surrogates'—of varying degrees of usefulness and usability—available on every computer. The best of these are free and open to anyone and are generated from direct scanning of the original books or manuscripts.

The *Digital Old Books* project [<http://num-scd-ulp.u-strasbg.fr>] from the Universities of Strasbourg offers much more than its humble name implies. Browsing the titles available there reveal amazing scholarly riches of truly rare titles, most from the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century available free and in full color. Searching and browsing is available from the homepage.

Of particular interest to those at John Jay College are those listed under *Droit* (law) which lists titles such as Beccaria, Cesare and Bentham, Jeremy (1797) [\*Traité des délits et des peines, suivie d'une Théorie des lois pénales par Jérémie Bentham\*](#). Our Special Collections Room holds the 1770, 1785 and 1788 English translations of this work, but not this early French translation.



Detail from: Ibn al-Haytham dit Alhazen, (1572) [\*Opticae thesaurus\*](#).

Page from: Damhouder, Josse (1562) [\*Praxis rerum criminalium iconibus materiae subjectae convenientibus\*](#).



Among the many other works on early criminology is De Damhouder, Josse (1562) [\*Praxis rerum criminalium iconibus materiae subjectae convenientibus\*](#), an illustrated manual of criminal law which includes detailed instructions on the identification of witches. While nearly all of these books are in European languages, the interface of this digital library is available in French, German or English. A visit to this resource is worth it for the illustrations alone!

- Ellen Belcher

# Presenting the new *VictimLaw Database*

# VictimLaw

Your Source for Crime Victim Rights and Protections



[www.VictimLaw.info](http://www.VictimLaw.info)

Is there a victim's rights statute in California similar to New York's? Or Vermont's? Or New Jersey's? What was the New Jersey case of State v. Muhammad all about? Are polygamous wives considered victims? Is there case law on abused husbands? All of these questions and many more can be answered from the VictimLaw database produced by The National Center for Victims of Crime in Washington, DC, [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org). There are several entry-points to search this database: by one of the nine specified victims' rights, for instance, restitution or enforcement; by term of your interest, for instance, polygamy; by examining the contents list of all the laws and administrative rulings included in the database, including tribal laws; or by a specific legal citation. Particularly helpful is the ability to search by type of victim – elderly, juvenile, etc. There is a FAQ on the homepage to help you search, and there are additional Links to Resources and a Legal Glossary. The database works better if you use the *close* box at the bottom of each search page and other internal navigation tools. VictimLaw does not yet have provisions relating to victims' privacy and confidentiality or the laws relating to protection orders for domestic abuse. The latter are at [www.womenslaw.org](http://www.womenslaw.org)

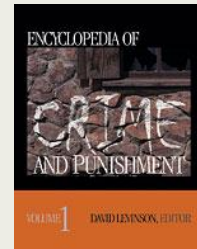
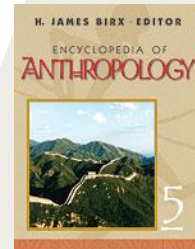
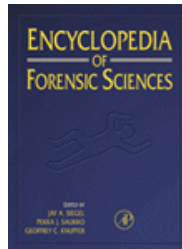
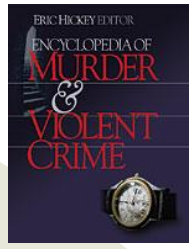
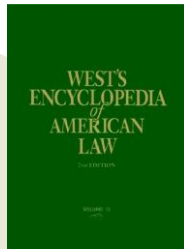
Access to this database is free and available at the VictimLaw URL, [www.VictimLaw.info](http://www.VictimLaw.info), from any computer. There is an optional login if you want to save searches. You can also find a link to this database on the Sealy Library website.

- Janice Dunham

## Beyond Wikipedia - Specialized Encyclopedias

- Gretchen Gross

Sampling of encyclopedias available electronically via our web page "Specialized Encyclopedias":



Everyone is talking about **Wikipedia** these days. After all, it is the **most frequently used source** by those who "Google" their topic. We can remind our students that Wikipedia content may be unreliable and may have been deliberately altered as a joke or a political statement. We are right to require our students to use books and scholarly journal articles for writing their papers. We can prohibit use of Wikipedia for academic projects. However, there still is an important benefit for students to start research on their topic by reading an article in an encyclopedia.

Encyclopedia articles are designed for the reader who is unfamiliar with a topic and wants an overview. Hundreds of specialized encyclopedias exist these days. In fact, many John Jay faculty members have been contributors to these encyclopedias. And now many of these encyclopedia articles are only "clicks" away!

The library has electronic access to over 500 encyclopedias, dictionaries and handbooks. Those we own are listed in the online catalog, **CUNY+**, under their title and subject. The URL in the **CUNY+** record can be used to access the electronic copy. We currently have trial access to another 57 encyclopedias from Sage Publications for this year. See our "**Library News Blog**" on the library home page.

To better introduce the wealth of encyclopedia articles available through the library, we have started a special web page about Specialized Encyclopedias. Go to the library home page, select "**Help With Research**" on the top right and then select "**Specialized Encyclopedias**" on the right side. Discover the universe of encyclopedia articles which have been peer reviewed or vetted by an editorial staff and now are locked from unwanted editing! Here is the academic community's answer to Wikipedia.

**Want to keep up with the latest changes and new additions to the Library? Join the JLIBRARY listserv by emailing Bonnie Nelson at [bnelson@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:bnelson@jjay.cuny.edu)**

# Information Literacy Guru visits CUNY

An information literacy seminar for John Jay faculty was held on March 14. Dr. Debra Gilchrist, of Pierce College, Washington State, gave us a lot of food for thought and ideas for planning on how best to incorporate information literacy concepts into the curricula. Dr. Gilchrist showed and discussed examples of well designed undergraduate assignments for courses in various disciplines. She later explained how Pierce College developed their approach to information literacy, integrating information literacy concepts and skills into the undergraduate curriculum at the assignment level, course level and program level, thus ensuring students build their information skills progressively as they earn their degree.

One of Dr. Gilchrist's model assignments was designed for an anthropology class. Students were asked to locate news articles on a local whale hunt both in the mainstream press and in the Native American press, and compare them. *The John Jay application:* While whale hunting might not resonate so much with New Yorkers, the same approach could be taken with an issue of local interest. We do have a strong ethnic press which may cover stories on illegal immigration, affordable housing and food in different ways than say, the *New York Times*.

*We have a great database of ethnic newspapers called Ethnic NewsWatch, and we have LexisNexis, which covers the mainstream press.*

Another assignment, for a senior seminar in sociology, asked students to select one reading from the required readings, and discover who else has built on that core work, and what has been done to develop the idea since that publication date. *The John Jay application:* The student might address the question in a number of ways, but one way would be to use the citation indexes, now available as the **Web of Knowledge** database. And also by searching for the concept in the library catalog, CUNY+, and a sociology index – either EBSCO's **SocINDEX** or CSA's **Sociological Abstracts**. Students could be alerted to (or, more optimistically, reminded of) the existence and functions of these databases by the professor, rather than given a broad “go to the library” instruction.

At a meeting with librarians the previous day, Dr Gilchrist had talked about Pierce College, a community college just south of Seattle. It has about the same enrollment as John Jay College, at around 12,000 student FTEs. Twenty percent of Pierce College students serve in the military. Faculty have become proficient in providing distance education as entire classes get sent overseas mid-semester. And the librarians have discovered that the library proxy server is robust enough to enable database access from Iraq.

Some handouts from Dr Gilchrist's seminar are still available, and include assignment examples. To request a copy through interdepartmental mail, please email [esexton@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:esexton@jjay.cuny.edu) or call ext. 8258.

Another information speaker addressed faculty at BMCC on March 21: Tom Eland, chair of the Library and Information Studies Department at Minneapolis Community & Technical College. Eland is committed to teaching students about the contexts in which information is produced and disseminated – what he calls the “why” of information. He teaches his students to recognize and examine the social and economic reasons why any information resource exists. His article *Critical thinking, deviant knowledge and the alternative press* is available on the web at <http://www.mnmacae.org/publications/Dec04Newsletter.swf>

**-Ellen Sexton**

## Wikis and Blogs in the Lloyd Sealy Library

Wikis and blogs, though used on the Internet for several years now, are still somewhat misunderstood technologies. Blogs are generally used to maintain online journals that can be easily commented on, with or without moderation. Wikis are most often used to organize large numbers of web pages created by a group of people; the most famous wiki, of course is Wikipedia. Both, however, are essentially just content management systems that enable non-technical people to create organized web pages.

Last summer, the Lloyd Sealy Library installed Mediawiki (the same software that powers *Wikipedia*) on the Library webserver. Using Mediawiki we set up a **Help with Research Wiki** (accessible from the Library home page) to organize all our various web pages that explain how to use particular databases or how to research information on particular subjects. All of the library faculty can easily add content to individual pages on the wiki or create new wiki pages. For example, we could (and did) quickly post information on how to use the new LexisNexis, or how to find good information about the current election season. The new wiki has proved to be quite popular: since its inception the main wiki page has been visited over 18,000 times.

Unlike *Wikipedia*, the Library's **Help with Research Wiki** is not open to the public, but we do invite collaboration from the larger John Jay community. We have thought about opening up the wiki to John Jay faculty and staff—surely you have expertise in doing research on your specialties that you could share with the larger community. If you could contribute by logging on (using your email username and password) would you? Let us know what you think. Meanwhile, send suggestions for additions or changes via the “**Comment on the wiki**” link on the bottom of the main **Help with Research Wiki** page or email Bonnie Nelson at [bnelson@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:bnelson@jjay.cuny.edu).

The Lloyd Sealy Library has been blogging since March of 2007. Our **Library News** page <http://www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/news/> is now a blog, where we can easily update our users on new library acquisitions and services and where you, our users, can comment on these, or anything else you care to let us know about. Comments are screened before posting, but we are very happy to hear from you. You can sign up for an RSS feed to be notified when new content is added to the blog.

**- Bonnie Nelson**

## 6 *Recently acquired and notable information literacy titles:* - Ellen Sexton

### *Books:*

Hardesty, L. (Ed.) (2007). *The role of the library in the first college year*. Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, University of South Carolina. **Z711.25.C65 R65 2007**

Presnell, J. L. (2007). *The information-literate historian: A guide to research for history students*. New York : Oxford University Press. **D16.2 .P715 2007**

Cook, D. & Cooper, N. (Eds.). (2006). *Teaching information literacy skills to social sciences students and practitioners: A casebook of applications*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries. **ZA3075 .T43 2006**

*Training college students in information literacy*. (2006). NY: Primary Research Group. **Z711.2 .T73 2006**

Germain. C. & Bernard, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Empowering students II: Teaching information literacy concepts with hands-on and minds-on activities*. Pittsburgh, PA : Library Instruction Publications. **Z711.2 .E562 2004**

Avery, E. F. (Ed.). (2003). *Assessing student learning outcomes for information literacy instruction in academic institutions*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries. **ZA3075 .A85 2003**

Burkhardt, J., MacDonald, M. & Rathemacher, M. (2003). *Teaching information literacy: 35 practical, standards-based exercises for college students*. Chicago: American Library Association. **ZA3075 .B87 2003**

Baker, N. & Huling, N. (2000). *A research guide for undergraduate students: English and American literature*. 5th ed. (2006, 6<sup>th</sup> edition coming soon). **Reference - PR56 .B34 2000**

### *Online and media:*

*Information literacy: The perils of online research*. (2006). [DVD]. Director/producer/writers, Amy S. Weber, Ryan Demetrak; Radish Creative Group. **Media Collection, Reserve - DVD-182**

*E-literate?* [Videotape]. (2000). [presented by] Pacific Bell and the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. CA: University of California Regents, 2000. **Media Collection, Reserve - VHS-1677**. Also available as streaming video on the world wide web at <http://www.newliteracies.gseis.ucla.edu/video/index.html>

*Navigating the sea of information*. [Videotape]. Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education, University of Pittsburgh (Producer). (1997). (Note: oddly still useful, despite being ten years old!). **Media Collection, Reserve - Z711 .N38 1997**

*Journal of information literacy*. An open source peer reviewed publication available at <http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/JIL.aspx>

## *News from the Media Collection* - Nancy Egan

We have made a lot of progress in cataloging John Jay College event videos. Now students and faculty can find in CUNY+ videos of many past events that took place in or were sponsored by the college. Among those that we have already cataloged are the "Criminal Justice Matters" television series, the Occasional Series on Reentry Researcher, the Book and Author Series, and the Graduate Lecture Series. These contain valuable content that can be used for research and in the classroom. This is an ongoing project.

Remember, reservation and purchase requests can be made through the library's homepage (on the right hand side, under Lloyd Sealy Library Information). If you're having any trouble with the system please contact the Media Librarian, Nancy Egan, at [negan@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:negan@jjay.cuny.edu) or ext. 8269. Below is a selected list of new videos and DVDs purchased for the collection. Some but not all were purchased at faculty request:

Ardizzone, S., Michaels, R. & Cohen, R. C. (Producers) and Ardizzone, S. (Director). (2007). *Hacking Democracy*. Reveals the problems and vulnerabilities in America's electronic voting system. **DVD-472**.

Berg, A. & Donner, F. (Producers) and Berg, A. (Director). (2007). *Deliver Us from Evil*. The confessed pedophile priest, Oliver O'Grady, and many of his victims are interviewed in this documentary about his actions and attempts by the Catholic Church to cover them up. **DVD-470**.

Gousset, L. M. (Producer) and Ziv, I. (Director). (2004). *Litigating Disaster*. Documents the tragedy and reveals the evidence against the Union Carbide Company in the wake of the deadliest chemical disaster of all time—the 1984 chemical leak in Bhopal, India. **DVD-476**.

Handros, L. (Producer) and Lapham, L. H. (Director). (2000). *Legacy of a Kidnapping: Lindbergh and the Triumph of the Tabloids*. Explores how modern tabloid journalism evolved from the Lindbergh kidnapping case. **VHS-1836**.

O'Hara, M. & Moore, M. (Producers) and Moore, M. (Director). (2007). *Sicko*. Another documentary from filmmaker Michael Moore. This one offers a scathing commentary on the American healthcare system. **DVD-459**.

Okasaki, S. (Producer, Director). (2007). *White Light, Black Rain: The Destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. Details the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Archival footage is combined with interviews of both Japanese survivors and Americans. **DVD-455**.

Spitzmiller, J. (Producer) and Rogerson, H. (Director). (2006). *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. This film follows inmates at the Luther Lockett Correctional Facility in Kentucky as they rehearse for their production of "The Tempest." **DVD-460**.

Williams, M. (Producer, Director). (2007). *Banished*. Examines three communities in Missouri, Arkansas and Georgia that expelled African Americans between the Civil War and the Great Depression. **DVD-482**.

Zwonitzer, M. (Producer) and Lennon, M. (Director). (2007). *The Supreme Court* A PBS series, narrated by David Strathairn, which explores the history of the United States Supreme Court. **DVD-6051 (four discs)**.

Newspapers are often referred to as a type of primary source along with resources such as diaries, correspondence, interview transcripts, government proceedings, photos, archives and manuscripts. When a student asks if a newspaper can be used as primary source, however, the answer is usually, “It depends.” While this caveat can apply to all manner of primary source material, newspapers can provoke confusion, perhaps because they are so easily available whereas many primary sources are only available in special collections.

If the subject of research is the newspaper itself – perhaps a student is researching how various newspapers covered the events of December 7, 1941 or September 11, 2001– then the paper is unquestionably a primary source. Otherwise, while not exactly an “I’ll-know-it-when-I-see-it” situation, there is an element of judgment involved in deciding when a newspaper article can fall into the category. A newspaper isn’t necessarily primary just because it’s from the days of yore, and conversely, a recent newspaper article isn’t useless in this regard.

Newspaper articles written at the time of an event in question can provide detailed descriptions of associated people, places, activities, issues and public opinion. An article that was originally written as interpretation or analysis (including an editorial or op-ed) can later provide a snapshot of the culture and mentality of a particular time.

Whereas a secondary source is an *analysis* of an event, a primary source provides *evidence*, sometimes on multiple levels simultaneously. If a newspaper report is an eyewitness account, it can be considered a primary source, though the witness’ credibility should be taken into account, just as it would in a court of law. The reactions of bystanders and other citizens to that event would certainly constitute a primary source that documents how some people feel about such incidents. An article about Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in a November 1863 copy of the *Chicago Tribune*, for instance, can provide text from the speech as well as audience reaction.

Discussing with students the nuances of the use of newspapers as primary sources is instructive because it raises the fundamental questions that should be asked of any source: How close is the report to the actual event or issue being researched? Is it the best source I can use for my purposes?

At the Lloyd Sealy Library, the *New York Times* Historical database link is found in the shortcuts list in the middle of the library home page. The link to the ProQuest Historical Newspapers database (including the *Atlanta Constitution*, *Boston Globe* and *Chicago Tribune* all dating back to the nineteenth century) is found in the alphabetical list of databases under “P.” LexisNexis (also in the shortcuts list) is another useful newspaper source with content from approximately 1980 to the present. These resources provide easy access for research and as tools to help students recognize the characteristics and value of primary sources.

**A blog is a web publishing system in which entries are posted by the author, or “blogger,” in reverse chronological order. Usually, the blogger cites a news story, comments on it, and provides hyperlinks to relevant sources. Many blogs let readers post their own comments as well, making it something of a collaborative venture.**

## Searching for Blogs On LexisNexis

LexisNexis Academic Search Premier has given its subscribers the option to search part of the blogosphere since 2006. They don’t choose the blogs themselves; rather they “pick up a feed” from Newstex, a company that licenses blogs.

The content is accessed by topic. A search for a certain topic will retrieve postings on that topic from different blogs. Each posting includes its title and date of publication, the title of the blog, a hyperlink to the blog, and other hyperlinks that appeared in the posting. The postings have the plain text look characteristic of LexisNexis. To see a posting as it originally appeared—i.e., to get the “look” of the page, including any images—one must follow the link to the blog and search its archives for the posting date.

In LexisNexis, both General Search options, Easy Search and Power Search, as well as News Search, include blogs as sources. Blogs are not included in Legal, Business or People searches, however. As with any LexisNexis search, one can use terms and connectors or natural language, do truncations and proximity searches, and put date parameters on the search. There are also different options for viewing results—Expanded list, Full Document, and Full with Indexing. Since the postings are short, the latter two are ideal. It’s also possible to sort results by relevance or publication date, and to narrow the search by adding terms.

The blogs licensed by LexisNexis are in the News folder on the Sources page. They are grouped into categories, including business, legal and government & politics. The total number of blogs is around 600—miniscule compared to the millions on the Web, but Lexis-Nexis has proximity searches and other search capabilities not available on Google’s blog search engine. Also, the blogs in LexisNexis have been reviewed and found worth licensing by Newstex, so poor-quality blogs should be excluded. (Many blog readers, however, prefer to judge for themselves what’s good.) And while blogs on the Web may come and go, those included in LexisNexis will be archived and accessible for a long time.

The bigger question is whether blogs are suitable resources for research. While it’s inconceivable a student could do a research paper using only blogs as sources, they could be a good starting point for research. For example, a criminal justice major could search the legal blogs on LexisNexis for a certain topic, and if many of the results she retrieves refer to the same topic, decide to look for books or scholarly articles on that topic. But she could do this on the free Web as well; for example, on the legal website Justia.com, one can search 150 criminal justice blogs at once.

- Austin Duffy

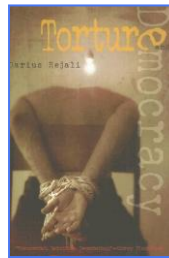
# Book browsers Spring 2008

- Marlene Kandel

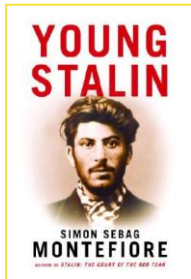
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