ProQuest History Vault is a powerful award-winning database that provides researchers with access to a wealth of historical information. The database consists of primary source, manuscript and archival collections sourced from top archival institutions. ProQuest History Vault currently has over 22.6 million pages in 63 different modules. During 2023, ProQuest History Vault will grow to have 67 modules and over 23.8 million pages.

With unique materials, full-text search capabilities, and harmonized indexing, ProQuest History Vault provides researchers with an effortless way to uncover previously unexplored perspectives.
Why ProQuest History Vault?

Here are just a few reasons why ProQuest History Vault is a must-have tool for students, professors, and libraries:

• **Fulfill research needs:** ProQuest History Vault offers tremendous collections-building value for libraries and can meet immediate and long-term research needs for students, researchers, and professors.

• **Access unique documents:** Find records not available in other primary source archives. History Vault collections detail both prominent and lesser-known figures and events, allowing for researchers to make new discoveries and find new topics.

• **Demonstrate proven success:** History Vault has been used in general education and research seminar courses and cited in numerous theses, dissertations, and books, indicating its usefulness and reliability.

• **Uncover the unexpected:** With harmonized vocabulary, detailed metadata, and full-text search capabilities, researchers can retrieve results across collections and increase their chances of making unexpected discoveries.

• **Save time and money:** Access archival collections from over 100 institutions without the need to travel, making research easier and more efficient.

• **Enable user-friendly access:** With multiple access points including suggested searches, highlight documents, event searches, collection descriptions, durable URLs, and basic and advanced search, ProQuest History Vault is accessible to researchers at all levels, from novice undergraduates to graduate students and professors.

Here, Professor Evan Faulkenbury (Assistant Professor of History, SUNY Cortland and Ph.D. from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) highlights the impact of searching across collections for his dissertation and first book on the voter education project:

"Without ProQuest History Vault, my book on the VEP would have been incomplete. In total, I drew on six collections from within the ProQuest History Vault: the Claude A. Barnett Papers, the SCLC Papers, the NAACP Papers, the A. Philip Randolph Papers, the Bayard Rustin Papers, and the President’s Committee on Civil Rights Files from the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library. These papers can be researched on-site at archives across the country, but I never would have been able to get to them all, much less find every instance where the VEP existed in their records.

One of its best features is the ability to search across the entire database. I would not have known to search for materials within the A. Philip Randolph Papers, for example, for Randolph was uninvolved in the VEP. And yet, through my keyword search, VEP-related materials popped up in his collection."


Flyer featuring Eugene V. Debs, from Socialist Party of America Records.
What Topics Are Covered in ProQuest History Vault?

Within History Vault, documents span hundreds of years and a diverse range of subjects, so there are countless topics that can benefit from the cross-search and harmonized indexing. A student studying civil rights during the Truman presidency, for example, will be able to find numerous records within the Black Freedom Struggle and NAACP modules in History Vault, and they will also find relevant materials in the collections sourced by ProQuest from the Harry S Truman Library that are in the American Politics and Society category within History Vault. Similarly, students interested in the anti-Vietnam War movement will find valuable records across the Civil Rights and Black Freedom Movement category, the American Politics and Society category, the Workers, Labor Unions, and Radical Politics category, and the International Relations and Military Conflicts category.

History Vault modules are organized into 9 thematic categories: Civil Rights and Black Freedom Struggle; Southern Life, Slavery, and the Civil War; Women’s History; Native American History; Revolutionary War and Early America; American Politics and Society; Workers, Labor Unions and Radical Politics; International Relations and Military Conflicts; and Latinx History.

One of the strengths of History Vault is its exceptional coverage of the Black Freedom Movement of the 20th century, with records of 4 of the most important civil rights organizations of the 1950s and 1960s (NAACP, SNCC, SCLC, and CORE) as well as records of other important organizations like the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs. But there is so much more in History Vault beyond these collections. Some of the amazing collections in History Vault include the following:

- **National Woman’s Party Records**, the organization whose activist approach and aggressive campaign for the right to vote was unique among suffrage organizations – and its use of nonviolent protest methods arguably set important precedents for later social movements pressing for equal rights

- **Socialist Party of America Records** allow students to reconstruct the history of one of the century’s most important revolutionary movements as well as Socialists’ role in countless reform campaigns, such as equal rights for all men and women; women’s suffrage; the abolition of child labor; the adoption of the initiative, referendum, and recall; greater support for education; the promotion of health and other social insurance measures; minimum wage scales; and the graduated income tax

- **Vietnam Veterans Against the War Records**, a collection chronicling the efforts of first antiwar organization whose members served in the very war they were protesting

- **Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, 1960-1969**, containing formerly classified documents from the U.S. State Department, one of the most important sources of American diplomatic reporting on political, military, social, and economic developments throughout the world. The History Vault collection of State Department files on the 1960s contains records from 39 countries and consists of just over 1,000,000 pages covering student demonstrations, political unrest, coups d’état, assassinations, political trials, meetings and visits of foreign leaders, economic and agricultural assistance, disputes over the use of international waters, international trade, and military conflicts during the turbulent 1960s around the world

“Such collections offer our students an unrivaled opportunity to engage with advanced historical research, conducting the same inquiries of the same materials that professional historians continue to use. Without ProQuest History Vault, I have no doubt that our students would struggle to produce such excellent work.”

– Joe Street, Associate Professor of Humanities, Northumbria University
These examples demonstrate the capability of ProQuest History Vault in providing students and researchers with quick access to an extensive range of collections. The platform offers a convenient alternative to traveling to archives, making it possible for users to search across many more collections than they would be able to if visiting each archive individually. Additionally, the harmonized indexing and full-text search capabilities increase the likelihood of uncovering records that might not have been found through traditional methods, unlocking new discoveries, and adding depth and completeness to research projects.

In addition to a richer search experience, access to more content also makes other features of the product, such as the timeline, more robust. With access to additional modules, the timeline becomes more comprehensive, gaining more events and providing results from a broader range of collections for specific events.
Here is a view of the timeline for a user with only access to the Black Freedom Struggle and NAACP modules:

In contrast, a user with full access to all modules will see a more robust timeline with the inclusion of additional events such as the Battle of Khe Sanh and other significant moments in Vietnam, providing a clear picture of how major events in the United States and around the world occurred simultaneously.

In addition to seeing more events, researchers with access to more modules will be able to see more relevant results. As seen in the search results comparison screenshots, a search for the April 11 entry of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 yields 32 results without full access, but with full access, the same search returns 46 results, providing a more complete picture of the topic.
“I introduced the value of History Vault content when I taught the undergraduate course Tools and Database for World History and the postgraduate course Science of Historical Data in History of Modern International Relations. It is really easy to retrieve relevant primary sources for research from the History Vault; cross-searching among different modules at one time is really helpful. Having content organized into unique collections by era and subject also gives students and researchers’ access to quantity and diversity within a specific area of study, helping them to gain a more thorough review of content in their fields. This enhances the quality of their research and helps them discover new insights into their disciplines.”

– Yao Bai-Hui, Professor of History, Capital Normal University, Beijing, China

History Vault has been widely recognized for its value to researchers, with its use being cited in over 60 dissertations and 39 books. This recognition is a testament to the powerful resources that History Vault provides, enabling researchers to uncover new information and deepen their understanding of historical events and movements. Here is a sampling of some of the books and dissertations that have cited History Vault in their footnotes:

Books:

- Seo, Sarah A. Policing the Open Road: How Cars Transformed American Freedom (2021)

Dissertations:


Not only have numerous professors and graduate students utilized History Vault in their research pursuits, but the platform has also been employed in a range of educational settings in recent years. From general education courses to undergraduate research seminars and graduate courses, History Vault has been assigned by professors to students, with many of these instructors sharing positive feedback on the platform and their students’ experiences using it. Here is what faculty are saying:

Professor Susie Woo, Associate Professor of American Studies at California State University, describing how her students reacted to using History Vault – Immigration: Records of the INS in her American Immigrant Cultures class:

“This database was a powerful way for students to see early immigration history through the actual documents and to see how people resisted even when they didn’t have equal rights or citizenship. … One student commented, ‘I thought that I hated history until I did his project and it’s kind of cool. I really felt like a historian, which was a new experience for me as I’m in computer science.’

A lot of students were excited to see these old documents firsthand and described how neat it was to see them digitized in a way that captured everything, even the handwritten notes. They were blown away that they had access to these hundred-year-old documents.”

Eric Arnesen, Professor of History, George Washington University, who has used History Vault for his research on the labor and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph:

“How do the resources contained in History Vault, along with other ProQuest digital projects, inform a project like this? The short answer is simply that they are indispensable. The relevance of these resources to historians is undeniable and well established.

Crafting a specific topic, locating relevant documents, constructing a narrative, and framing an argument, of course, constitute the hard work students will have to undertake. The Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century’s modules, NAACP Papers modules in History Vault, as well as other ProQuest sources, do not eliminate that necessary hard work. Rather, they provide students and their instructors with abundant resources on a wide range of subjects that allows them to concentrate on learning the historian’s craft though independent research.”

Caitlin Rosenthal, Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, utilized the database to support her research for her dissertation and later her book, Accounting for Slavery:

“Now large parts of that collection [Records of Antebellum Southern Plantations] are online at ProQuest History Vault and searching them helped me to turn up materials I would never have found otherwise. … History Vault also helped me to look at more records more quickly and thus to get a sense of what was typical and what was exceptional.”
For more information on collections and possible uses of History Vault, please see the following items:

- History Vault use cases and other resources: https://proquest.libguides.com/historyvault/usestudies
- History Vault webinar recordings: https://proquest.libguides.com/historyvault/home#s-lg-box-27840187
- History Vault Libguide: https://proquest.libguides.com/historyvault

Photo credits:
Page 1 (left to right). Telegram from Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Congo, 1960-1963; Photograph of demonstration from Vietnam Veterans Against the War Records; Cover page of Women’s Agenda magazine, from Women’s Action Alliance Records; Photograph of immigration inspector, from Immigration: Records of the INS, 1880-1930.
Page 8 (left to right). Cover page of leaflet titled “Huey Newton Talks to the Movement,” from Students for a Democratic Society Papers; Flyer announcing speaking appearance by Socialist Party Presidential candidate, Norman Thomas, from the Socialist Party of America Papers; Page from the Students for a Democratic Society’s Port Huron Statement.

ProQuest History Vault empowers researchers to unearth the unexpected.