History and Genealogy in Newspapers

Robin McDonough, MS Ed
History and Genealogy Department
St. Louis County Library
1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63131
(314) 994-3300, ext. 2070
www.slcl.org

I. Overview
   A. History of newspapers
   B. Why newspapers are important

II. What is in a newspaper that will help me with my genealogical research?
   A. News articles
   B. Obituaries
   C. Burial permits
   D. Births
   E. Marriages
   F. Divorces
   G. Anniversaries
   H. Photos
   I. Legal notices
   J. Family reunions
   K. Social events
   L. Achievements
   M. Club officers and members
   N. Politics
   O. Military news
   P. Sports
   Q. Classified advertisements
   R. Advertisements

III. Guides for newspaper research
   A. The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy (929.1 S724)
   B. Family Tree Historical Newspapers Guide: How to Find Your Ancestors in Archived Newspapers (929.1072 B422F)
   C. How to Find Your Family History in Newspapers (R 929.1 C772H)
   D. PastPorts articles
      1. “Historic Newspapers”-May, 2010
3. “Missouri Republican”-April, 2012

IV. In what format(s) does the newspaper I need exist?
   A. Print
   B. Microfilm
   C. Abstract
   D. Database

V. Print resources for locating newspapers (examples)
   A. National Resources: American Newspapers (R 071 A512)
   B. State-specific resources: Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 1814-1879 (R 977.3 S425N)
   C. City/county specific resources (often indexes and clippings): Marriages and Deaths from Steuben County, New York Newspapers, 1797-1868 (974.783 M383M)
   D. Ethnic-specific resources: African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography (R 015.73 A258)

VI. Be aware of name changes and mergers (Example-St. Louis Globe-Democrat)
   A. Daily Missouri Democrat, 1853-1868
   B. Missouri Democrat, 1868-1872
   C. St. Louis Democrat, 1873-1875
   D. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1875-1986

VII. Cite your source
    A. Complete newspaper title
    B. City and state
    C. Date
    D. Edition
    E. Page number
    F. Column number/letter
    G. Database and access date or film information

VIII. Problems with newspapers
    A. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) may misread print
    B. Creases/folds
    C. Tears
    D. Smudges
    E. Typos

IX. Tips
    A. Put in other information-address, maiden name, etc. when searching a database
    B. May need to browse the newspaper instead of searching
Can use wildcard asterisk and Boolean searches in some databases

Items like marriages and births sometimes filler so may not always find

Many families could not afford an obituary or chose to publish one

Urban vs. rural papers

St. Louis newspaper obituary tips:
   1. Before 1915, more obituaries in the Globe-Democrat than Post-Dispatch
   2. 1800s Post-Dispatch obituaries found on first page of classified ads
   3. Westliche Post obituaries—look for the dark lines
   4. More St. Louis obituaries beginning in late 1800s

St. Louis County Library History & Genealogy online databases


B. African-American Newspapers: 19th Century—Consists of primary source material providing insight into the cultural life and history during the first half of the 1800s through articles written by African-Americans for African-Americans.

C. America’s Obituaries and Death Notices—Contains obituaries and death notices for all 50 states. Coverage varies by place and date.


E. Civil War: A Newspaper Perspective—Includes Civil War-era newspapers published 1860-1865.

F. Historical Newspapers: U.S. Major Dailies—Full text coverage of several major papers including the Wall Street Journal and the Chicago Daily Tribune.

G. Historical St. Louis Post-Dispatch—Covers the St. Louis Post-Dispatch from 1874-2003.

H. Newspaper Archive—Contains thousands of historical newspaper titles from the U.S. and many foreign countries. Coverage is spotty.

I. Newspapers.com—Tutorial can be found on SLCL youtube channel. Offers more than 10,000 newspapers from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Ireland, Great Britain and Panama. Includes the following St. Louis newspapers:
   St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1874-1922
   St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1853-1963
   St. Louis Star and Times, 1910-1922
   Amerika (in German), 1872-1914
   Anzeiger des Westens (in German), 1842-1898
   Jewish Voice, 1880-1920
   Jewish Tribune, 1879-1884
   Le Patriote (in French), 1878-1887
   Modern View (Jewish), 1913-1940
   Naborhood Link News (South St. Louis County), 1930-1969
   St. Louis Palladium (African-American), 1903-1907
   Westliche Post (in German), 1857-1938

J. Nineteenth-century U. S. Newspapers—Contains hundreds of urban and rural newspapers. Coverage is spotty.
K. **ProQuest Digital Microfilm**™ – *New York Times*—Digital reproduction of the original newspaper, so it contains all the photos and other illustrations found in the print version. 2008-3 months ago.

L. **ProQuest Digital Microfilm**™ – *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*—Digital reproduction of the original newspaper, so it contains all the photos and other illustrations found in the print version. 2008-3 months ago.

M. **St. Louis Post-Dispatch Newsbank/Access World News**—Full text, comprehensive database with access from 1988 to present and partial access from 1981-1987. Text only, does not include images.

XI. St. Louis Post-Dispatch Options/Years

A. Newspapers.com: 1874-1922 (best interface)

B. Historical Post-Dispatch: 1874-2003 (widest coverage)

C. ProQuest Digital Microfilm-St. Louis Post-Dispatch: 2008-3 months ago (most recent)

D. St. Louis Post-Dispatch Newsbank: 1988-present, partial access 1981-1987 (text only, no images)

XII. Other online resources

A. **Chronicling America** (Library of Congress)—http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/. Includes newspapers for selected states as well as a U.S. newspapers directory from 1690 to present.

B. **Ethnic News Watch** (SLCL)—Includes hundreds of titles, includes magazines as well as newspapers.

C. **State Historical Society of Missouri Digital Newspaper Project/Newspapers on Microfilm**—http://shs.umsystem.edu/newspaper/index.shtml. Newspapers from all over the state of Missouri. Digitized or on microfilm.

D. **St. Louis Globe-Democrat Clipping Files**—www.umsl.edu/mercantile/special_collections/slma-112.html. This database of articles covers the 1920s to the 1980s.


F. **St. Louis County Library History & Genealogy Indexes** (examples)
   1. *St. Louis County Watchman-Advocate* index
   2. *Westliche Post* obituary index


H. Local libraries and historical societies

I. International newspaper websites