

History 203 L
Dimensions of History Lab
Wednesdays, 5:00 - 7:50 p.m.
CAS 128
Roger Williams University
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Week of September 30

Searching tips and techniques.

1. I'd like to broaden your exposure to different kinds of search engines. I suspect most of us automatically revert to Google as first choice. When I'm in a hurry, I do the same thing. But Google is not the only player in the game, as last week's tutorial showed. Nor is there just *one* way to search Google. So let's do a little exploring. To prepare for this lab:
 - A. First, read the Introductory chapter in Davidson, *The Strange Death of Silas Deane*,
 - B. Then, summarize the two alternative hypotheses regarding Deane's death. The authors conclude we'll probably never know the truth—but which hypothesis do *you* find more convincing, and why?
 - C. Load up the **Primary Source Investigator** which accompanied your book. Play with the Primary Source Investigator to give yourself a little sense of how it works, what the icons mean, and how to move from item to item. Then locate the primary sources which the authors include.
 - D. Sample about *half* of them, including at least one of the visual objects. Then, in this sequences, First, conjecture *why* the authors chose that *particular* primary source. Second, look at the questions the author has used relative to those artifacts. Do the questions give clues as to why the authors included them?
 - E. Missing evidence? Is there a person, place, event, or *substance* (that's a broad hint) knowing more about would make you lean more to one hypothesis or the other? Choose a couple to think about.

2. Search away. Following the lead of the tutorial, investigate your choices using these search engines:
 - A. Google
 - B. Yahoo.
 - C. Clusty

As was the case in the tutorial, note the *sequence* of returns for your query. To save the results for later analysis, copy them into your word processor. (Click on Edit and a drop down menu will appear. Then click on "Select all" Copy the selection and past to the word processor.

After you've conducted a simple search, note that each of the three search engines has the potential for an *advanced* search. Look at these, notice that the options for

advanced searches are *not* the same in all of them. How do they differ from each other, and which seems to be the most useful advanced search procedure?
Conduct your searches again, using the “advanced” function. (Note for analysis what additional features you used).

3. Bookmark any results which might seem useful for further investigation. In Order to make your bookmarks as useful as possible, store them online. I’m going to demonstrate a number of ways to do this: but we’ll start with MURL, or My Universal Resource Locator at <http://murl.com/newuser/>

We’ll use this prep as a basis for discussion in the lab, and for going further into the territory of search engines and their effective use.

Looking Ahead: Do you have Firefox on your home computer? This alternative browser has some very useful add-ons. If you do not have it and are comfortable downloading software to your machine, you can find it at <http://www.firefox.com>. If you’re nervous about it, and have a computer-savvy friend, ask him or her to help. Alternately, if you have a laptop you can bring it to my office during my office hours and I’ll help you do this.