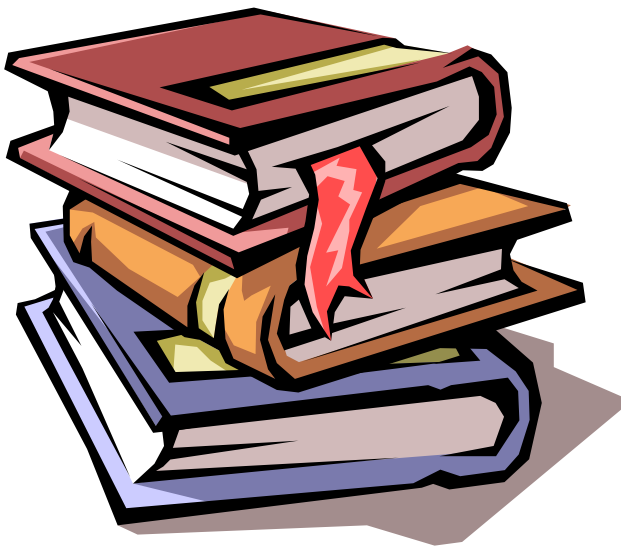


Print and Online Reference Sources



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New York Society Library
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For academics and other serious researchers, reference sources constitute the lifeblood of their work. As opposed to casual reading, research often entails an open-ended search for unexpected information, either to support a hypothesis or to create one.

The use of subject bibliographies is almost always the method by which a researcher begins to investigate the existing literature on a given subject. Library catalogs provide uniform access to their materials by subject, using the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* as a thesaurus for standardized access. One can search for books, periodical *titles*, maps, recordings, visual materials, etc. by the use of these subject headings.

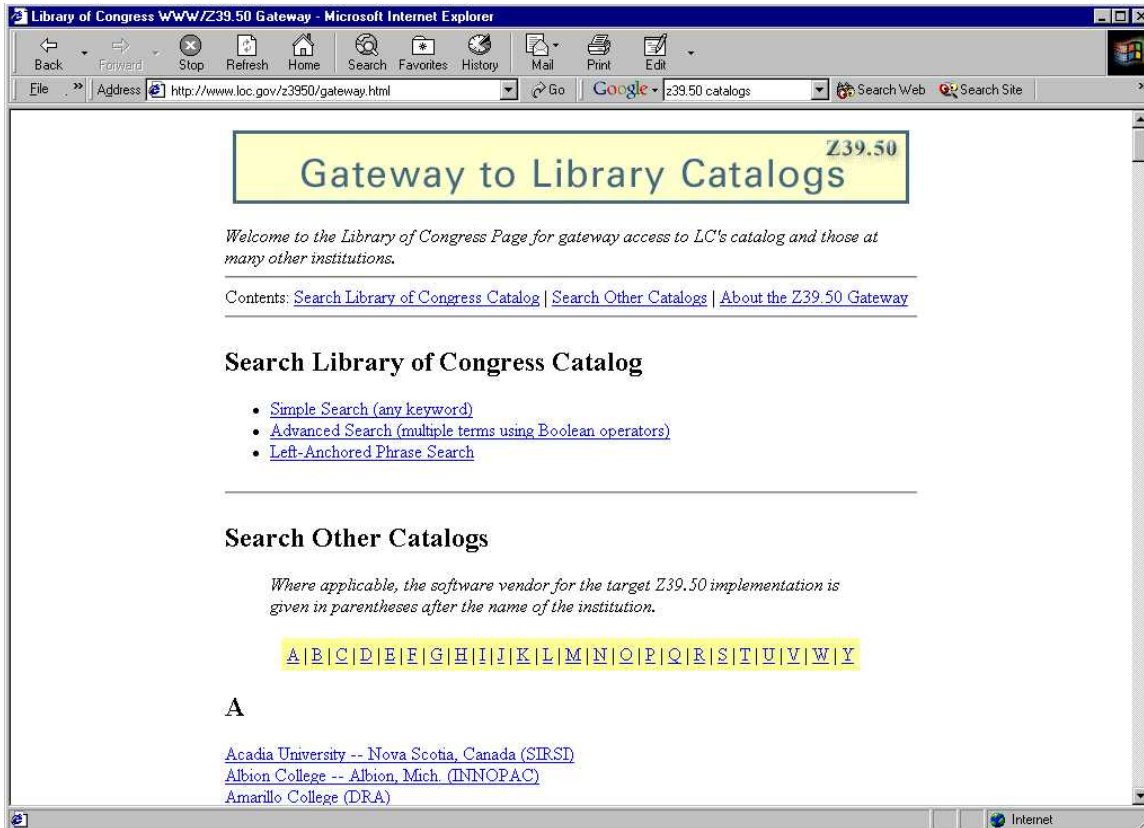


Fig. 1

Figure 1 is an online catalog ‘gateway’ that provides a researcher with the ability to search any of a group of academic libraries without having to master the arcane terminology inherent in each catalog. The Library of Congress catalog search screen (URL: <http://www.loc.gov/z3950/gateway.html>) is displayed in figure 2. A search for the general subject term ‘Byzantine’ is input; the first screen of results (20 of 2,073 hits) is shown in figure 3.

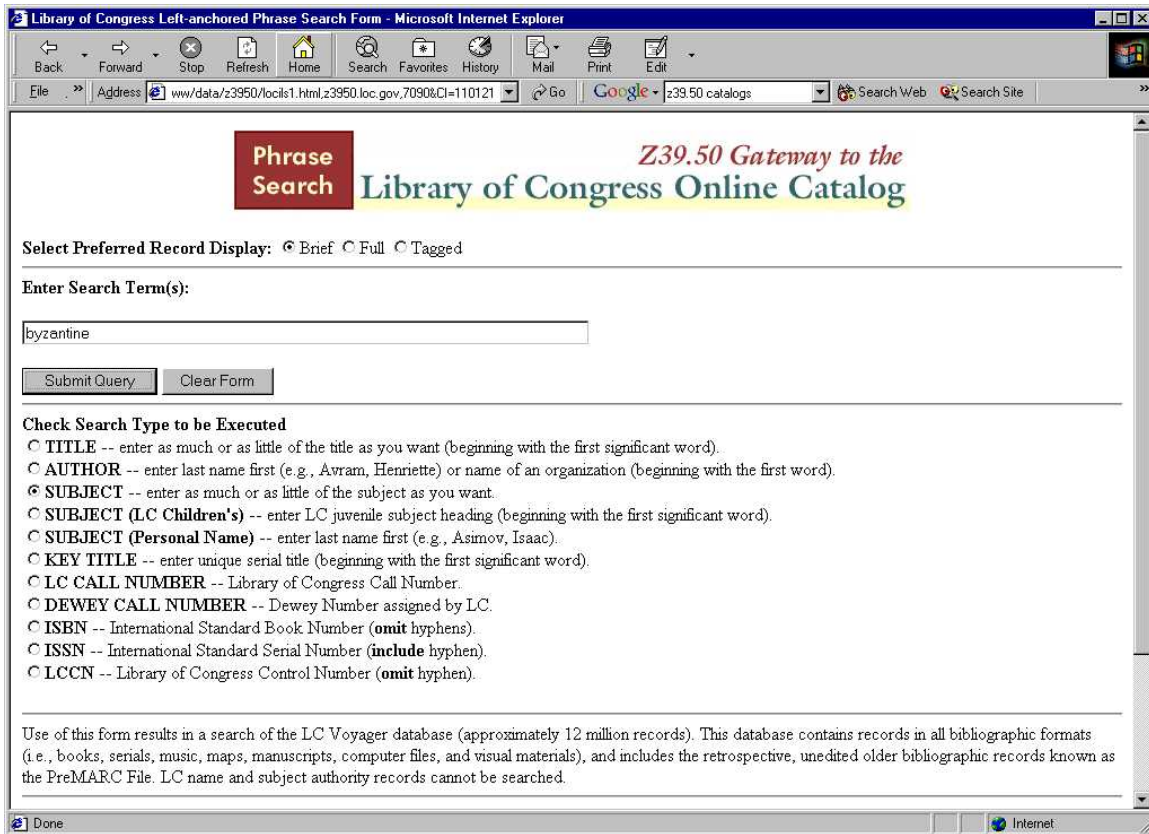


Fig. 2

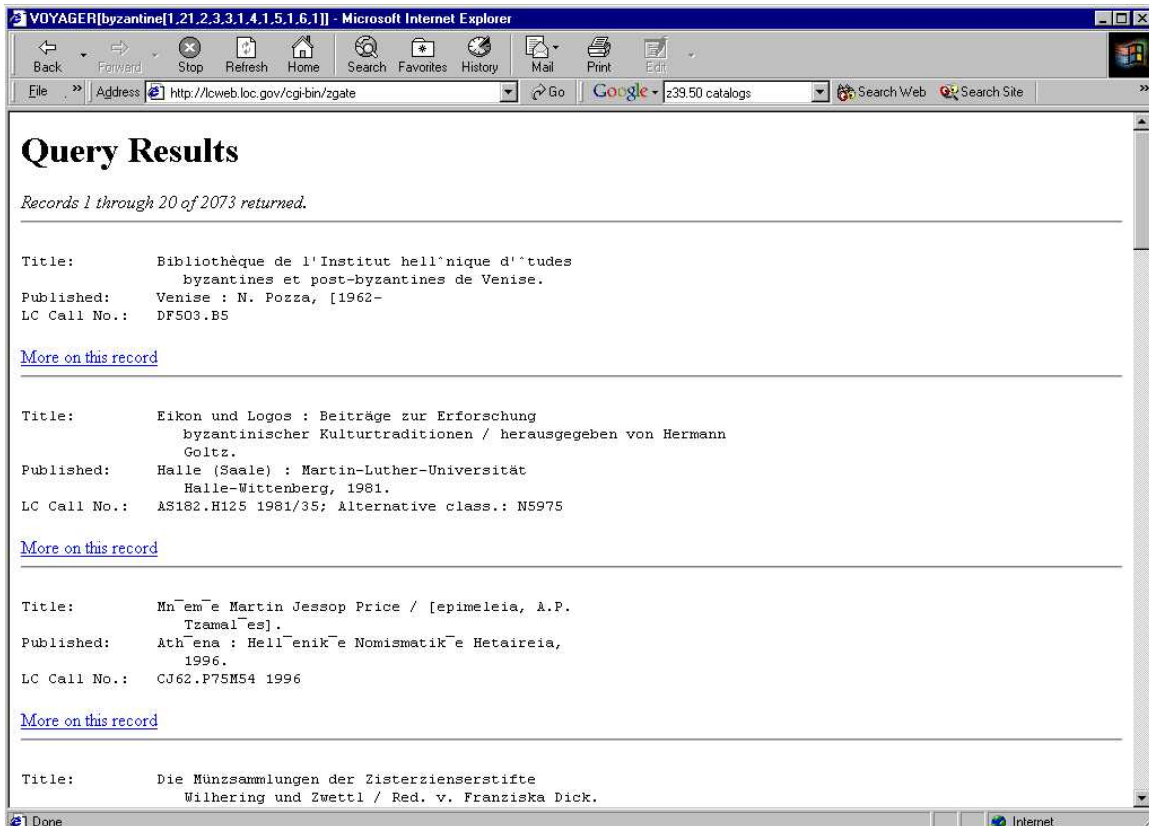


Fig. 3

A comparable print source for bibliographical information would be the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, 3rd ed. (NYSL location: Reference 016.82 C). This work indexes major and minor figures in English literary history, and provides extensive checklists of works by and about them.

For access to the many tens of thousands of articles written yearly on any number of subjects, one would consult a periodical index. These indexes, general or subject-specific, provide author and subject access to individual articles, something that a library catalog or a bibliography will usually not provide. *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* (NYSL location: Reference 050 R) is a good general-purpose periodical index that indexes many popular magazines.

Comparable online sources are generally expensive for libraries to subscribe and offer to patrons; the New York Society Library is currently exploring member interests and the costs involved in providing online access to this type of resource. There are some freely available online bibliography sites. Figure 4 shows a sub-indexed page of a site called *Direct Search*, compiled by Gary Price, a librarian at George Washington University. This web site (URL: <http://gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~gprice/bibs.htm>) provides access to a number of searchable bibliographies, which have been grouped into broad subject areas.

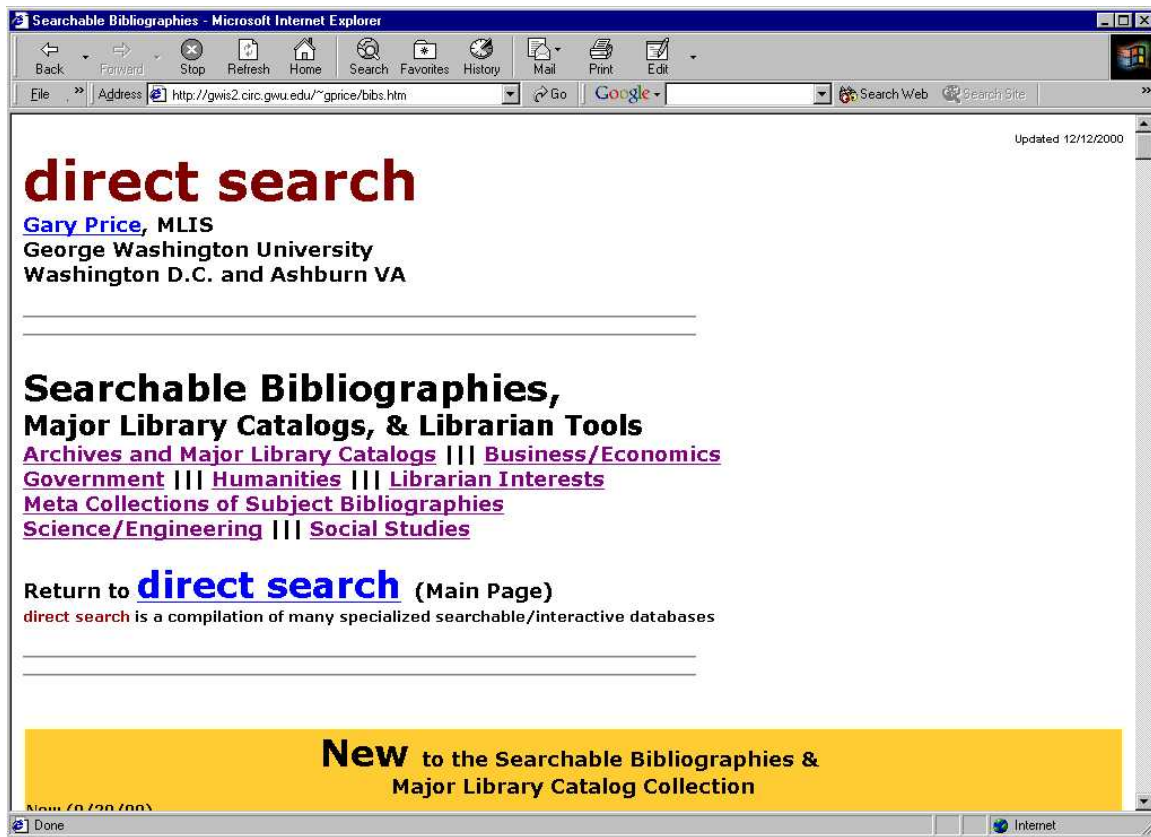


Fig. 4

Choosing the government grouping provides an alphabetized list of sources (see fig. 5).

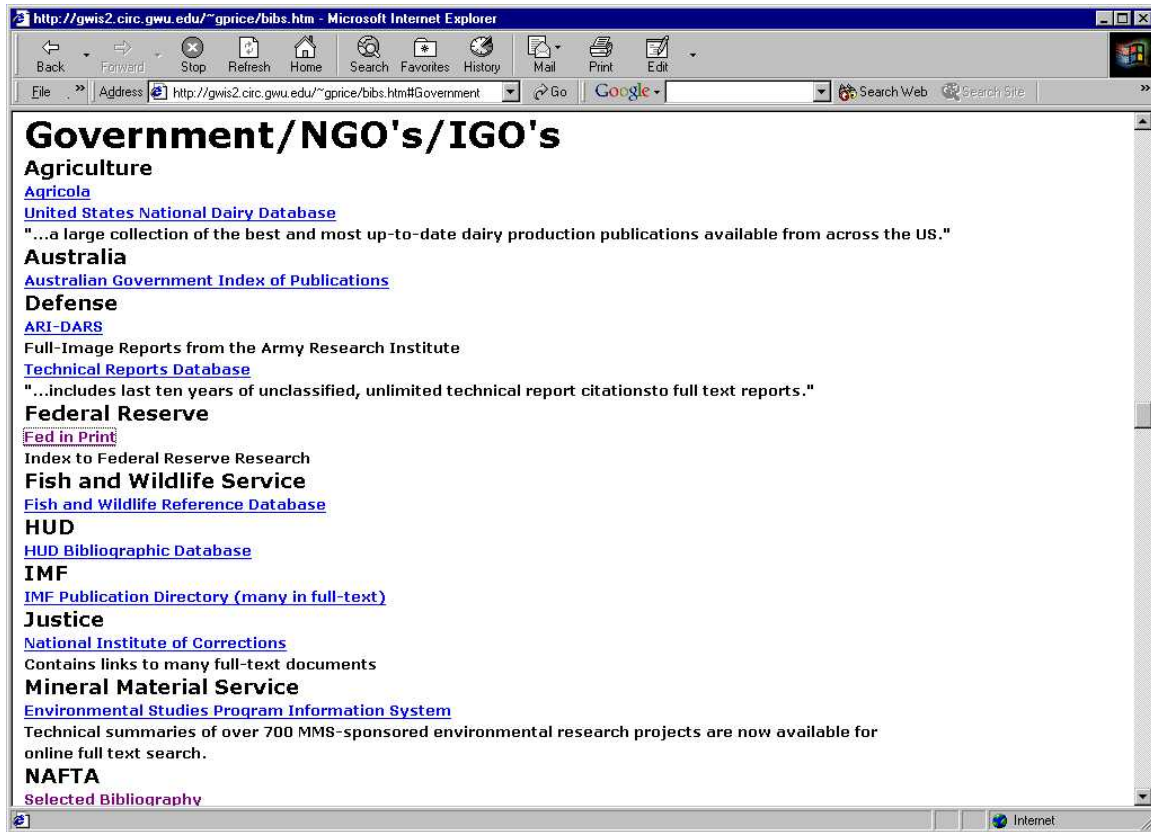


Fig. 5

Clicking on the choice for 'NAFTA' leads to an extensive bibliography on many aspects of NAFTA, including journal citations (see fig. 6). Although this bibliography runs up only to 1998, it could still be a very valuable resource for a researcher focused on this particular subject (URL: <http://www.ita.doc.gov/legal/bibwork.html>).

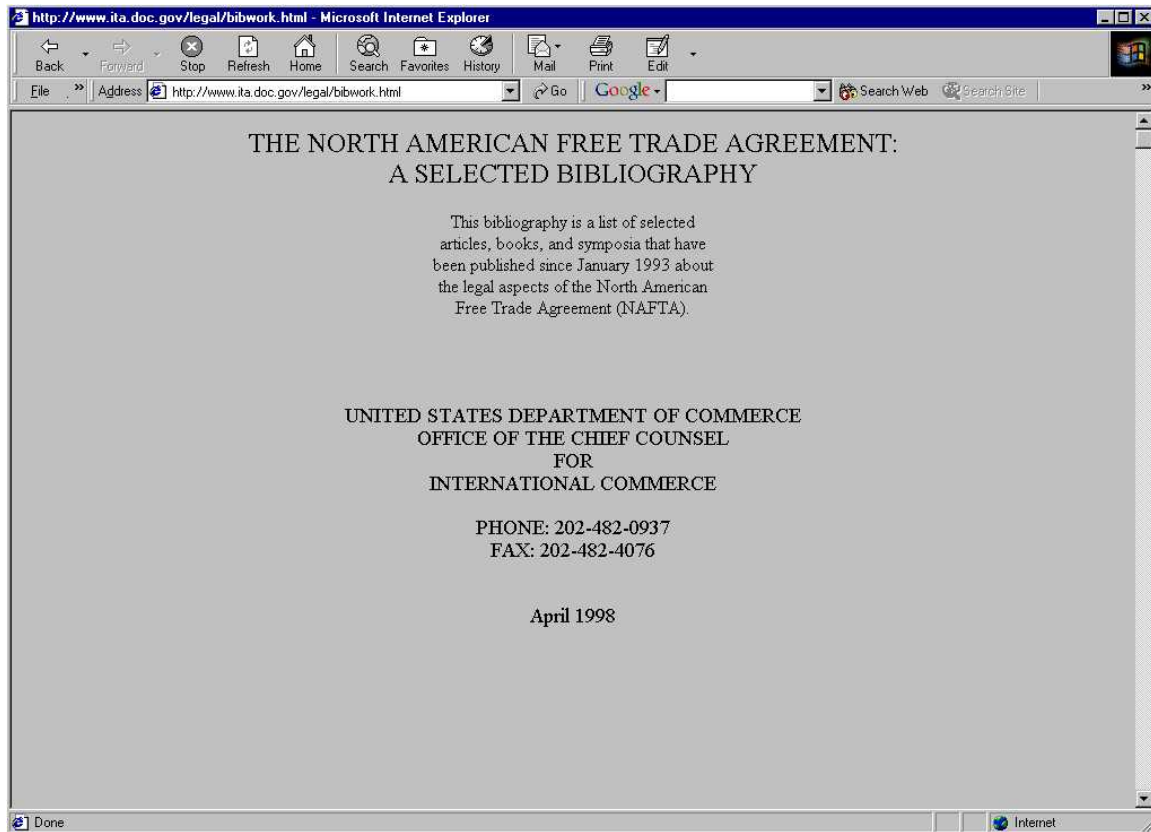


Fig. 6

To find biographical information in print sources, one could consult titles such as the *Personal Name Index to "The New York Times Index"* (NYSL location: Reference 072 N), *Biography index* (NYSL location: Reference 016.92 B), and *American National Biography* (NYSL location: Reference 920 A5126). As its name indicates, the *Personal Name Index* is an invaluable tool in using the *New York Times* as a biographical resource. *Biography Index* has an international scope and indexes periodicals, while *American National Biography* is useful in researching historic figures.

To research biographical information online, one might start with one of several wonderful all-purpose reference sites, the *WWW Virtual Library* (URL: <http://vlib.org/Overview.html>). In figure 7, one can see that it provides broad categories of Internet information.

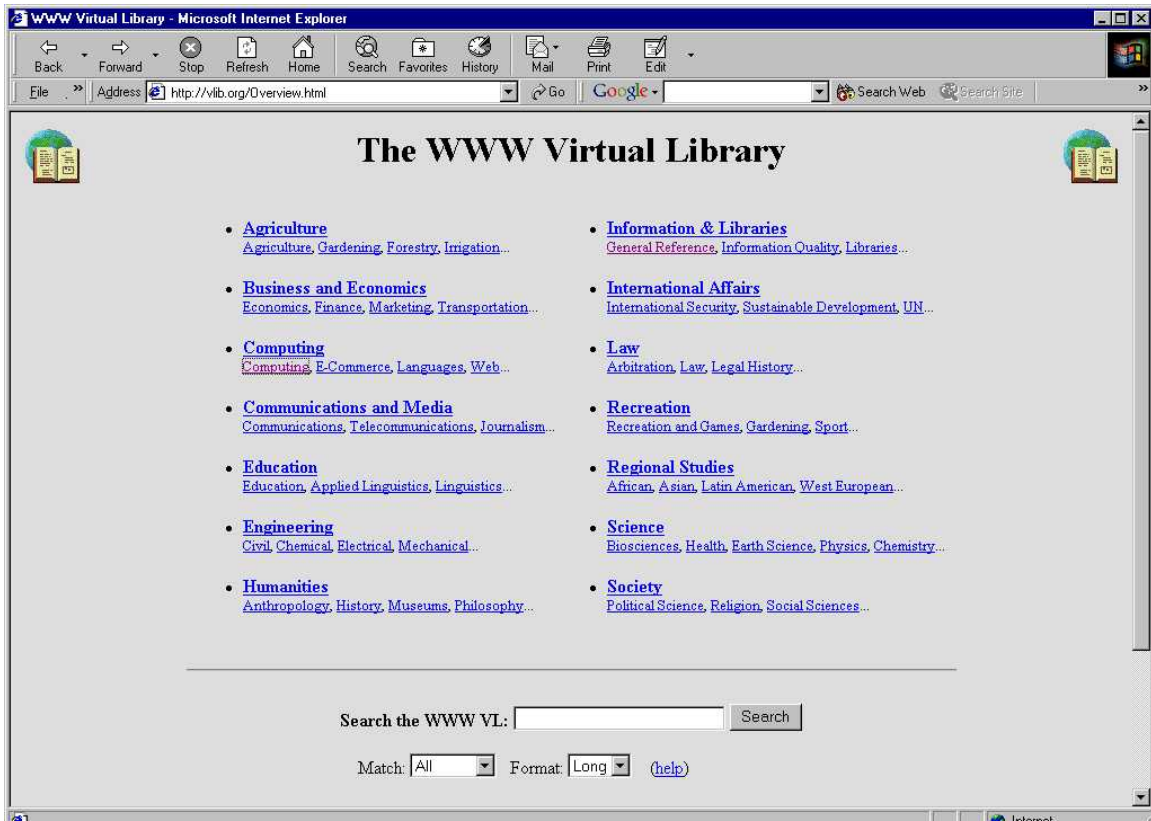


Fig. 7

If we choose 'General Reference' under 'Information & Libraries,' and then 'Biographical Sources,' we are able to then choose from a variety of biographical web sites (see figure 8).

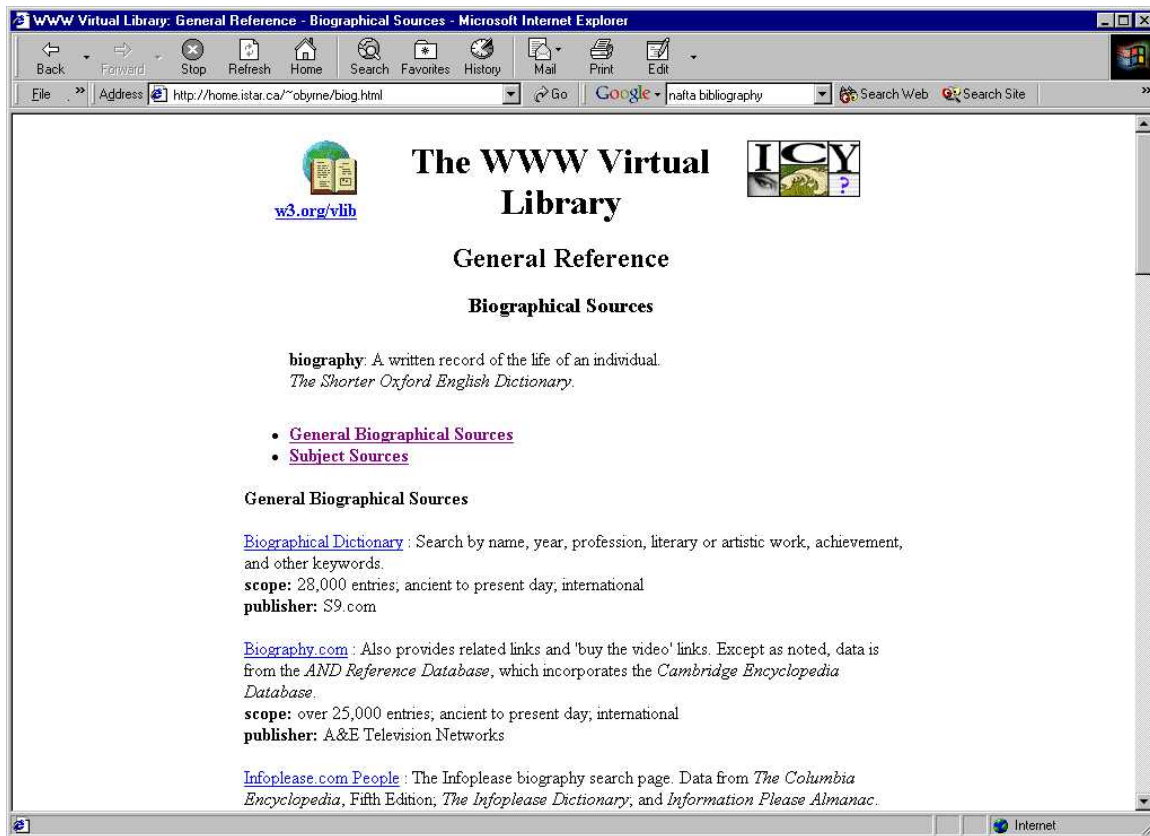


Fig. 8

At the bottom of this screen, we can select the *World Biographical Index* (URL: http://www.biblio.tu-bs.de/acwww25u/wbi_en/), a bio-bibliographic index that provides citations to works that contain biographical information about a given person. This site also provides some very context-sensitive help in the right-hand framed section. In figure 9, we see a search input for 'Henry James,' with the occupation of 'author' and the years of his birth and death, the better to distinguish him from his father.

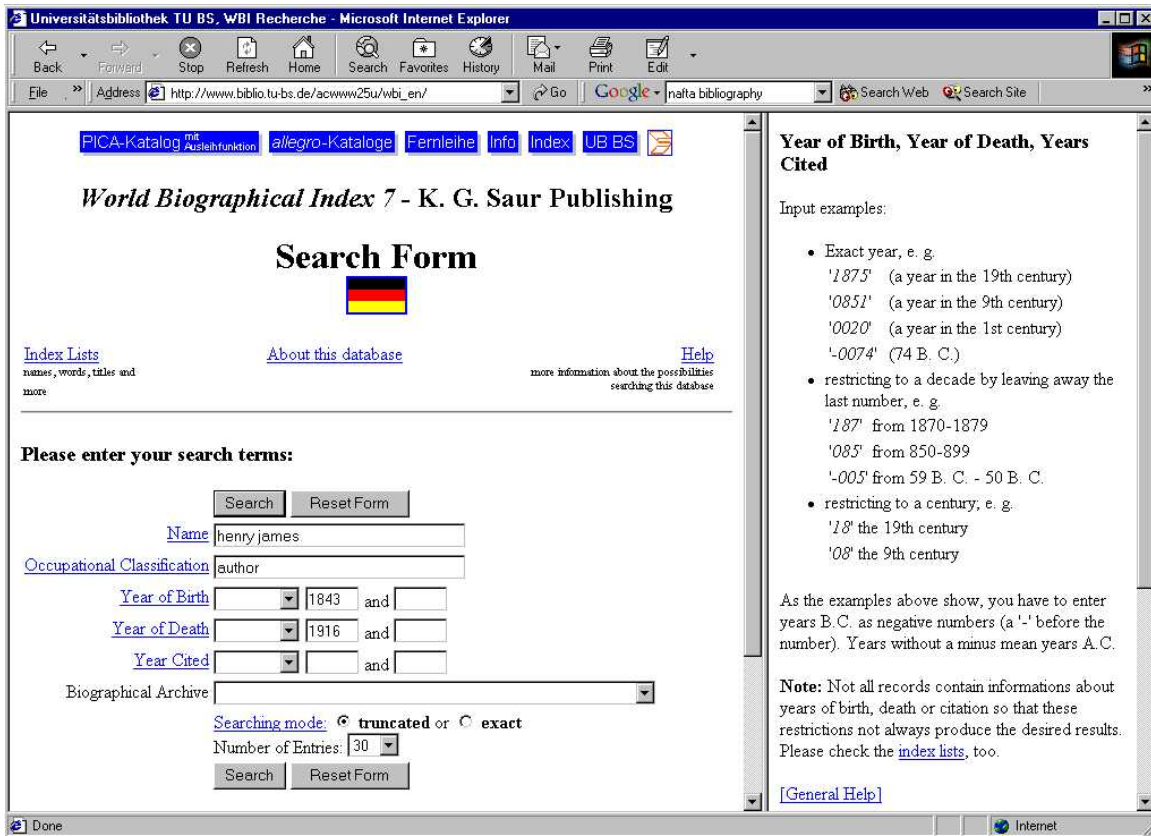


Fig. 9

The results of this search can be seen in figure 10, which provides a listing of titles that contain information about Henry James.

UB BS

World Biographical Index 7 - K. G. Saur Publishing

Biographical Entries

[\[Search Form\]](#)

Name: James, Henry
 Dates: 1843-1916
 Occupations: novelist
 Groups: Narrative Writers
 Archive: British Biographical Archive
 Fiche: I 606,315-320; II 1574,139

Title of Source: Kirk J.F [= Short title]
 Critical dictionary of English literature and British and American authors / Kirk, J. F.. - London. - 1891 (2 vols)

Title of Source: WWW 1916 [= Short title]
 Who Was Who 1916-1928. - London. - 1929

Name: James, Henry
 Dates: 1843-1916
 Occupations: novelist; critic
 Groups: Narrative Writers, Journalists, Correspondents, Editors, Critics
 Archive: American Biographical Archive
 Fiche: I 836,275-279,289-308

Title of Source: MOT 1865 [= Short title]
 Men of the time: a biographical dictionary of eminent living characters of both sexes. - A new ed. - London. -

Fig. 10

Another wonderful research web site is the *Internet Public Library* (URL: <http://www.ipl.org>). Working from its initial screen (see figure 11), we can select 'Reference Center,' then 'Reference Resources,' and then 'Biographies.'

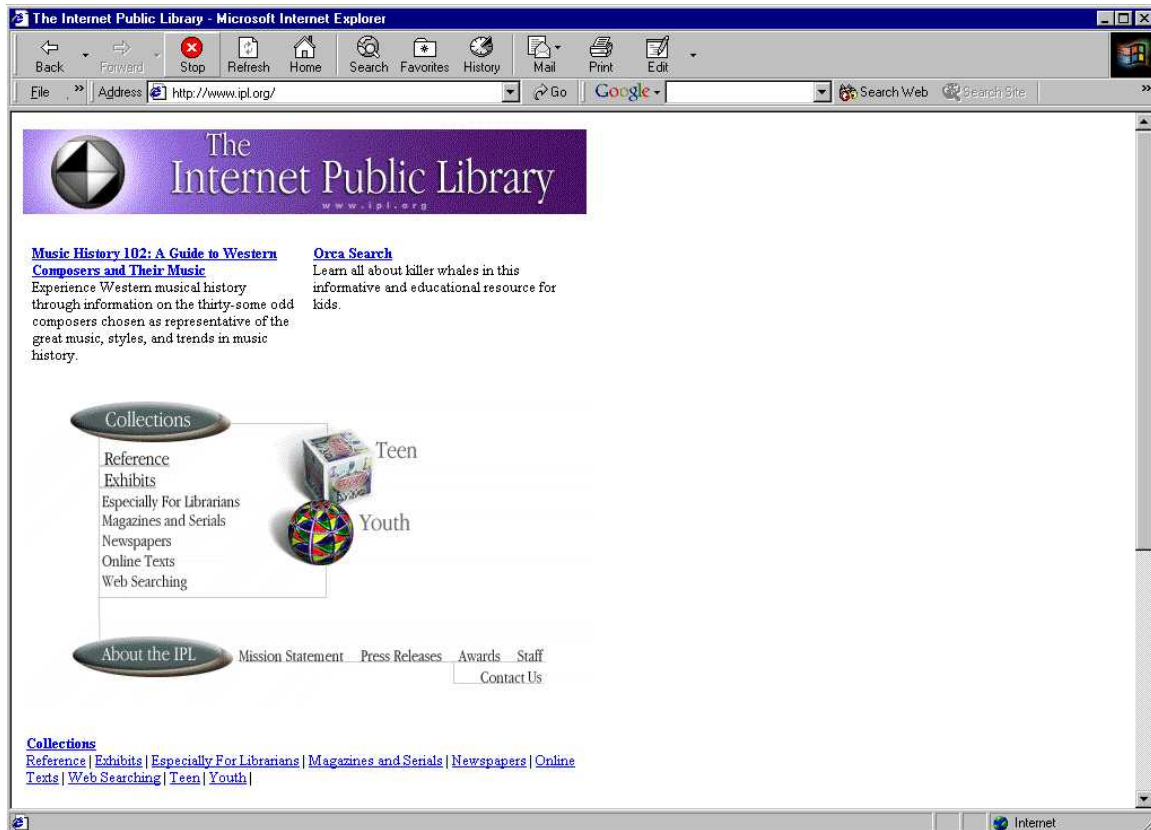


Fig. 11

Under 'Biographies' we can select 'Authors,' which provides, among other things, a link to the *Gale Literary Index* (URL: <http://www.galenet.com/servlet/LitIndex>). This index is searchable, and indexes only Gale publications, but it is still a biographical research tool, as many libraries have several Gale publications in their reference collections.

Encyclopedias provide general information on a wide variety of topics. The Library, like many others, owns a print copy of the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (NYSL location: Large Study Room 030 N), generally regarded as an authoritative source of general information on any topic. There is also a CD-ROM version, which the Library owns, and is available either at selected online catalog workstations or by requesting the discs from the Circulation Desk. There is also a *free* Internet version of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (URL: <http://www.britannica.com>), which is somewhat commercial but still provides access to the wonderful database of information. In figure 12, the initial screen of the site is displayed, with a search for 'Henry James' input.

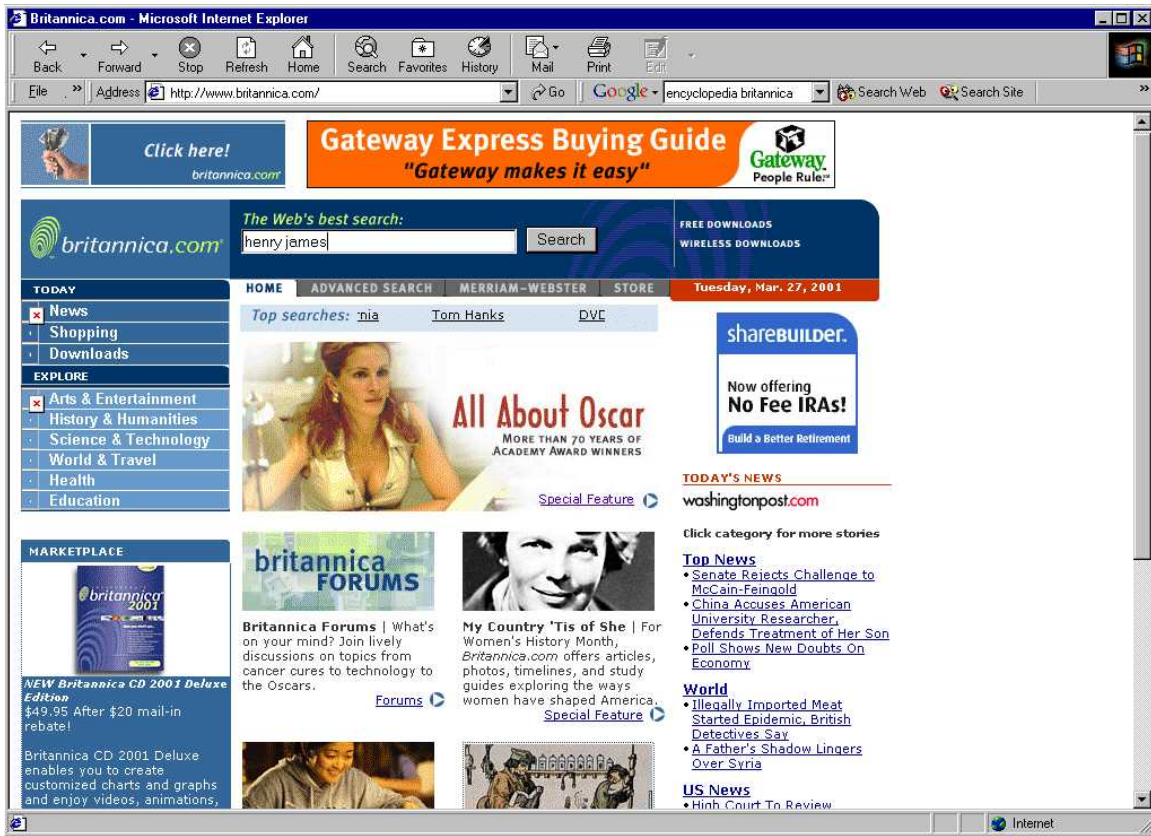


Fig. 12

Clicking on the 'search' button brings us to a results screen (figure 13) that includes *Encyclopaedia Britannica* articles as well as connections to other resources on Henry James.

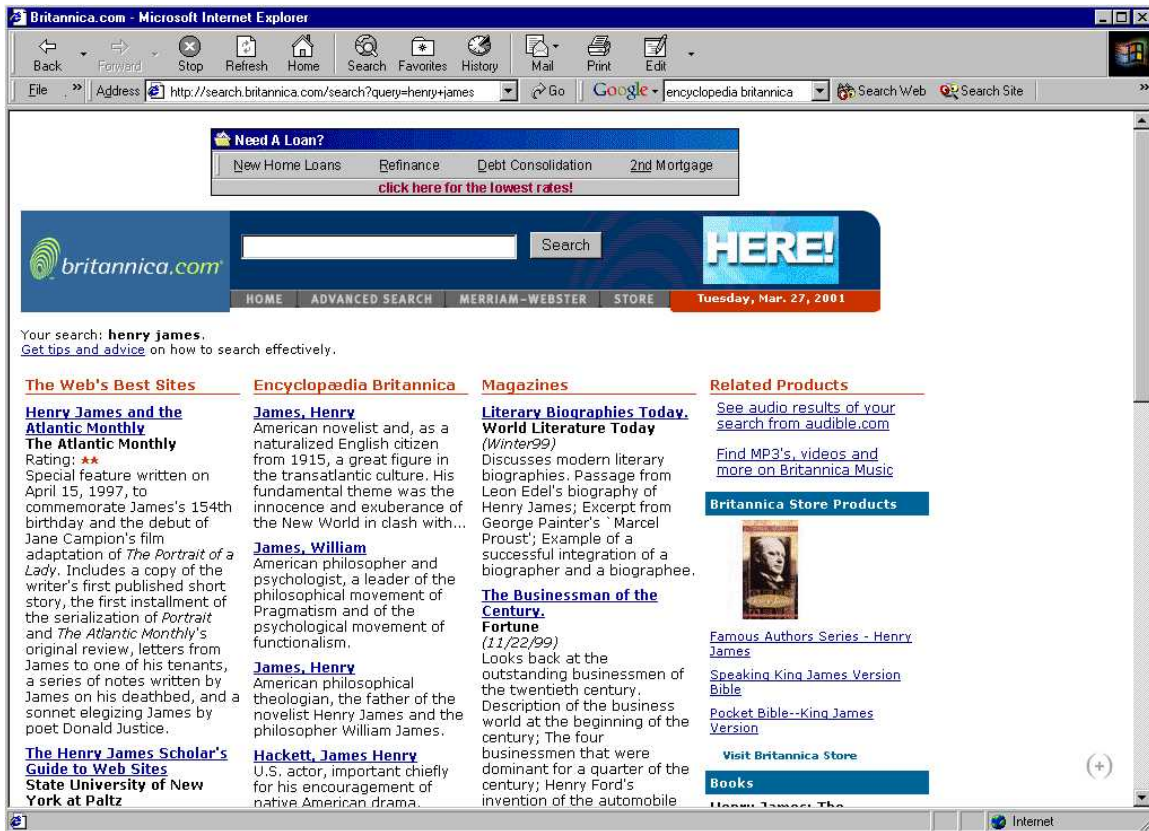


Fig. 12

Choosing the encyclopedia article on Henry James gives us access to the article (see figure 13), which runs over several linked web pages, and appears to include most if not all of the print material.

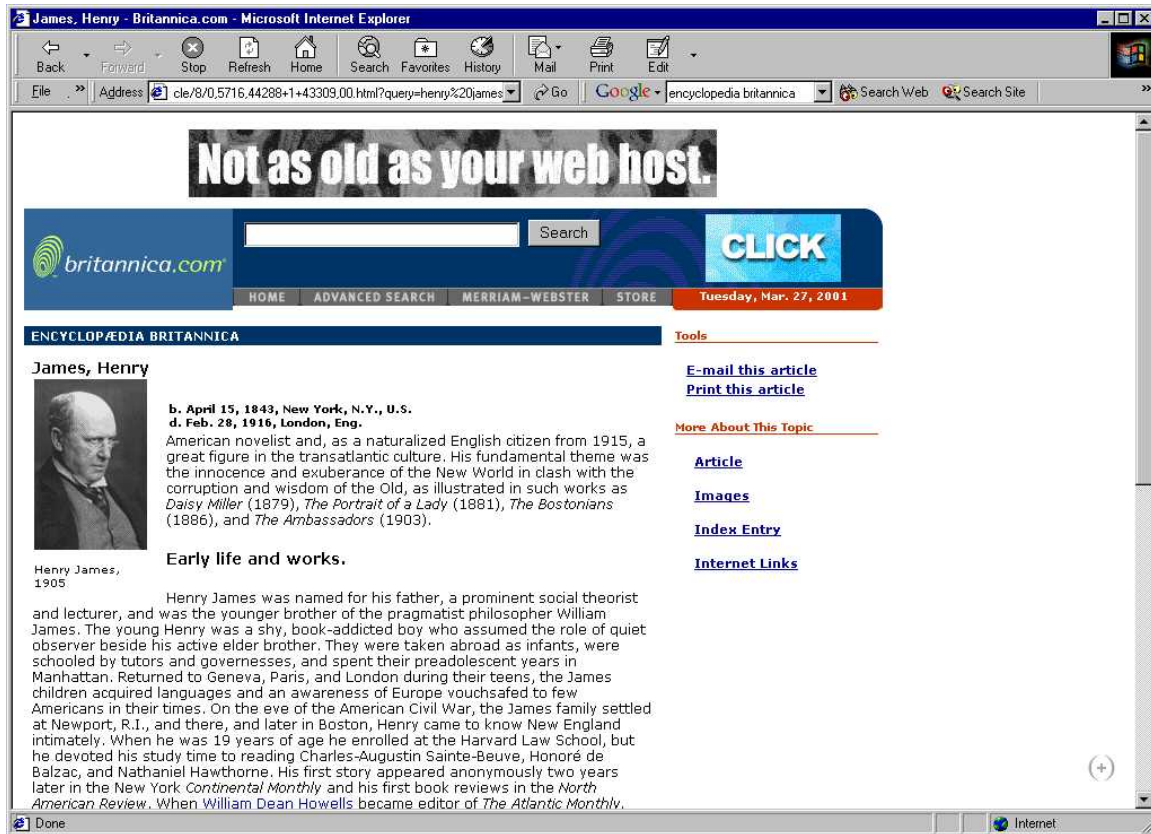


Fig. 13

Perhaps the most helpful research website I have come across in the last few years is *Refdesk.com* (URL: <http://www.refdesk.com>). In fact, I employ it as my home page, because it includes among its vast resources the *Google* search engine (URL: <http://www.google.com>), my favorite tool for surfing the Internet when I don't have a clue of what's available. *Refdesk.com* (see figure 14) contains a wealth of links to all manner of sites in many subject areas. It is a great place to begin looking for answers to questions, both mundane and profound.

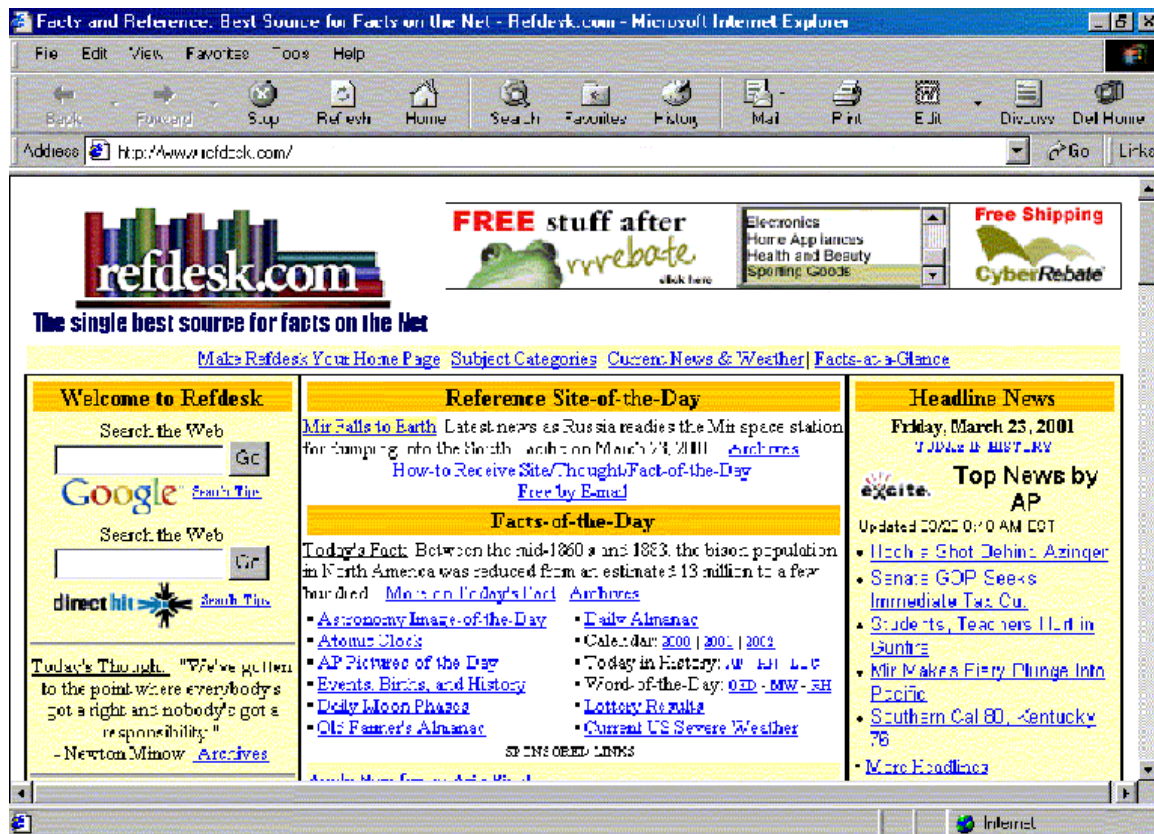


Fig. 14

Refdesk.com is essentially one very large web page, as opposed to a site composed of many linked pages, so it actually takes up much more than one single screen. It contains links to calendar sites, online encyclopedias, online dictionaries, online newspapers and magazines, weather-related sites, statistical data sites, directories of people, map sites, genealogy sites, currency conversion sites, and much, much more. One can start researching with *Refdesk.com* and never use any other tool.

Research and writing sometimes requires the employment of statistical data to advance or refute a theory or opinion. Under the *Refdesk.com* listing for 'U.S. Census Bureau' one is taken to the Census Bureau's website (URL: <http://www.census.gov>), where it is possible to consult the *Statistical Abstract*, a great print tool (NYSL location: Reference 317.3 S) and equally useful online. The website states that "as the national data book it contains a collection of statistics on social and economic conditions in the United States." Figure 15 shows a portion of the kinds of information available at a mouse click.

Section	2000	1999	1998	1997
	Table Number			
Section 1. Population	1 - 76	1 - 90	1 - 91	1 - 87
Section 2. Vital Statistics	77 - 150	91 - 162	92 - 163	88 - 152
Section 3. Health and Nutrition	151 - 238	163 - 252	164 - 249	153 - 232
Section 4. Education	239 - 328	253 - 341	250 - 334	233 - 312
Section 5. Law Enforcement, Courts, and Prison	329 - 379	342 - 392	335 - 386	313 - 366
Section 6. Geography and Environment	380 - 414	393 - 426	387 - 421	367 - 400
Section 7. Parks, Recreation, and Travel	415 - 451	427 - 461	422 - 457	401 - 436
Section 8. Elections	452 - 489	462 - 499	458 - 495	437 - 473
Section 9. State and Local Government	490 - 531	500 - 541	496 - 536	474 - 514
Section 10. Federal Government Finances and Employment	532 - 564	542 - 573	537 - 566	515 - 543
Section 11. National Defense and Veterans Affairs	565 - 597	574 - 606	567 - 598	544 - 575
Section 12. Social Insurance and Human Services	598 - 642	607 - 648	599 - 643	576 - 618
Section 13. Labor Force, Employment, and Earnings	643 - 714	649 - 720	644 - 714	619 - 691
Section 14. Income, Expenditures, and Wealth	715 - 766	721 - 774	715 - 770	692 - 750

Fig. 15

There is simply a huge amount of statistical data available here at no cost, because in essence the citizens of the U.S. have already paid for it. Clicking on ‘State Profiles’ produces a color map (see figure 16), which is used to select specific states, for each of which large amounts of statistical data exists.

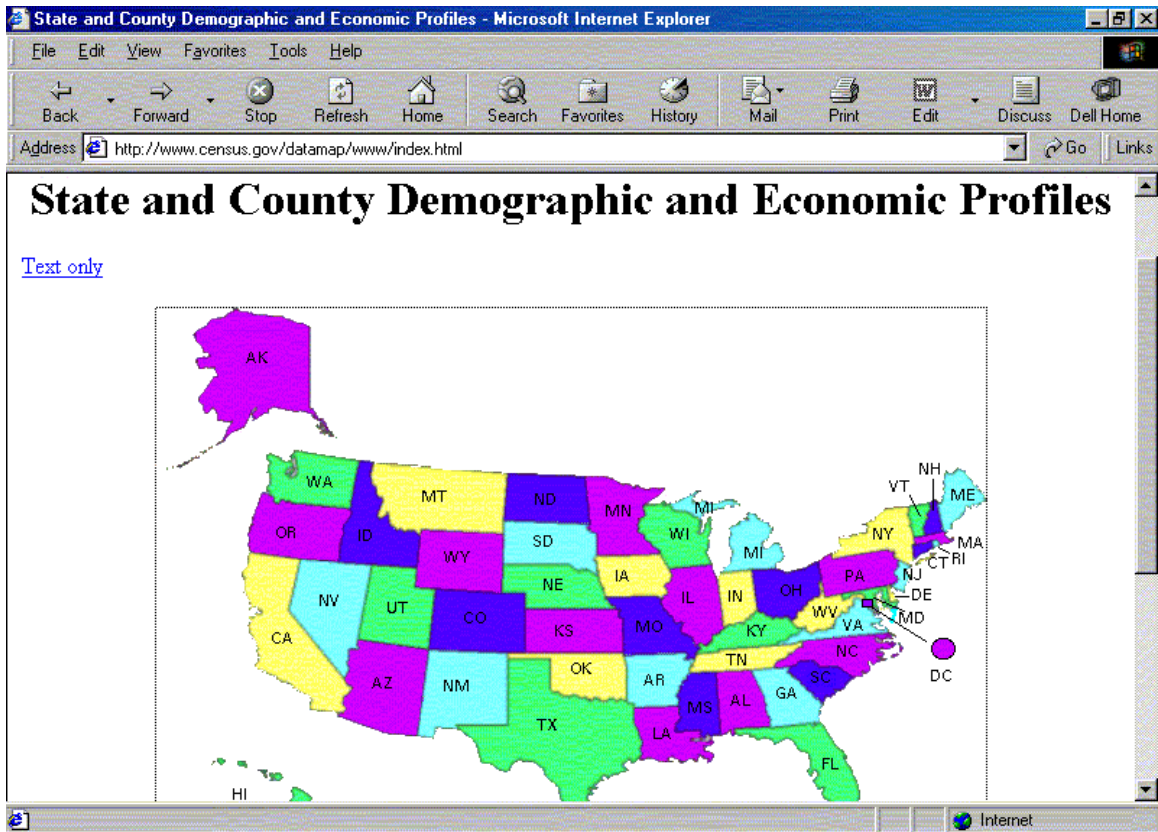


Fig. 16

Figure 17 illustrates the kinds of statistical information available for Manhattan.

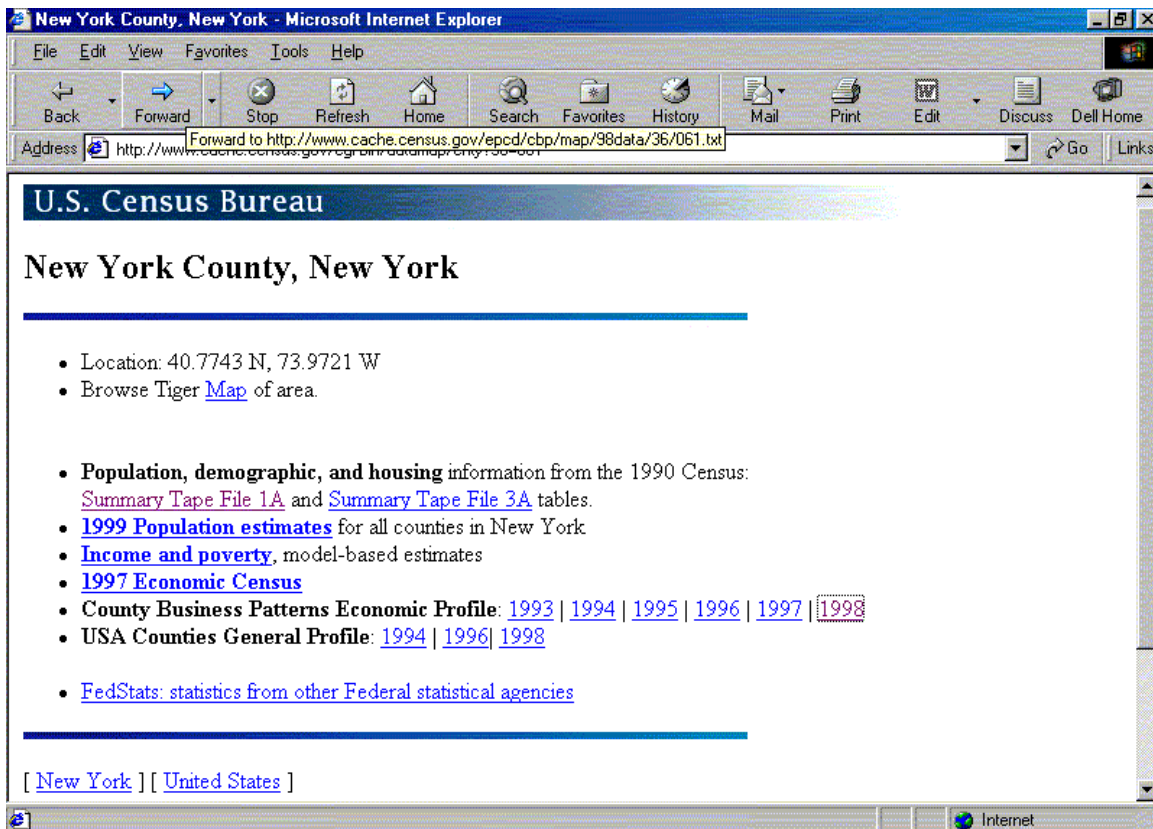


Fig. 17

Dictionaries are a standard reference tool, used in a pinch to define a term and also to investigate the etymology of a word or phrase. The *Oxford English Dictionary* in print form (NYSL location: Reference 423 O) is probably the definitive English language dictionary; it is also available online as a fee-based resource and is under consideration as a Library acquisition.

There are a variety of online dictionaries available at no cost. Some are online versions of older editions that are perfectly serviceable for everyday lookups; others are specialized dictionaries compiled by knowledgeable parties as a public service. The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., is available online (URL: <http://bartleby.com/61>). The *Bartleby* website is replete with great reference tools, and this dictionary can provide everything that a paper version can (see figure 18).

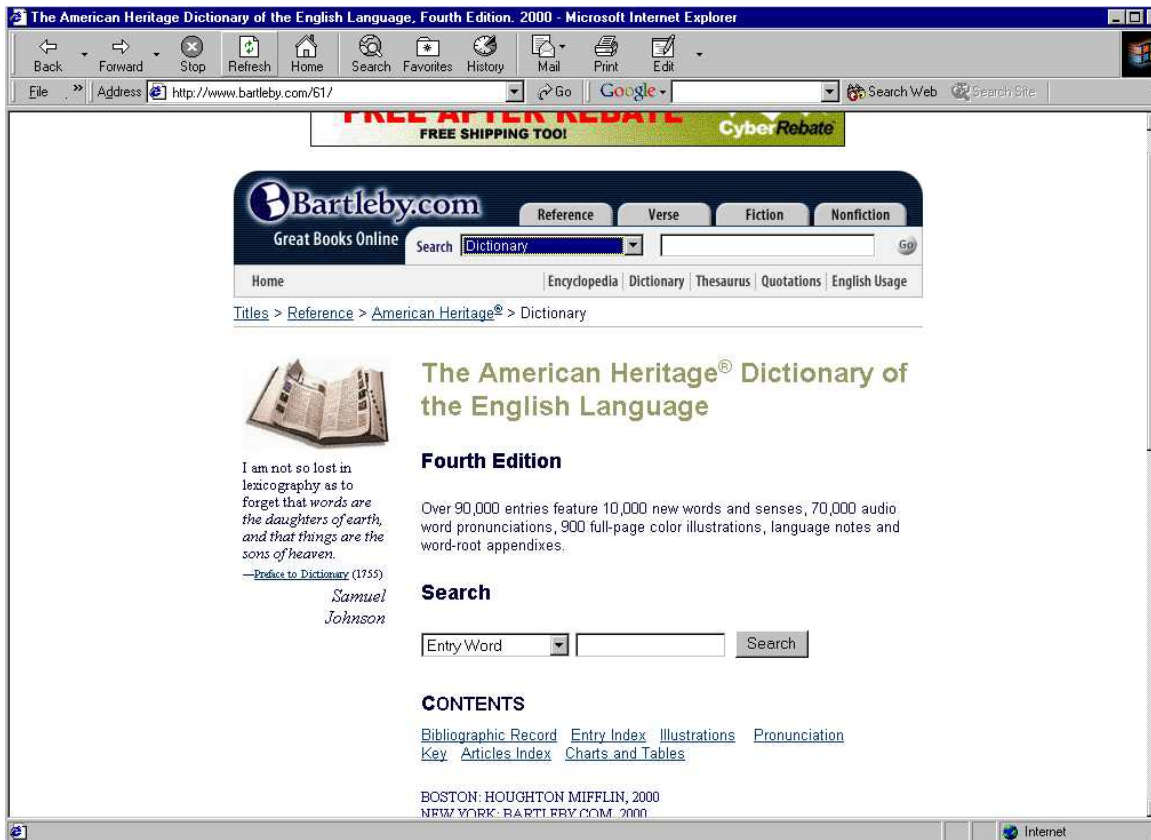


Fig. 18

The *Free Online Dictionary of Computing (FOLDOC)* (URL: <http://foldoc.doc.ic.ac.uk/foldoc/index.html>) is another kind of online dictionary that provides subject-specific information, in this case, on computers and technology. Figure 19 illustrates a results screen from a lookup on the term ‘ftp,’ which stands for ‘file transfer protocol (a method to transfer files over the Internet). Note the clickable blue links to other definitions.



Fig. 19

The above constitutes just a beginning introduction to the research resources available on the Internet. Along with online shopping and e-mail, the Internet is a treasure trove of available information, and has become an indispensable research tool for scholars and amateur sleuths alike.