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2003

The Annual Register, 1758-2001

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Recommended Citation
Sugarman, Tammy, "The Annual Register, 1758-2001" (2003). *University Library Faculty Publications*. Paper 33.
http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/univ_lib_facpub/33

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Reference Review

Product Name: The Annual Register, 1758-2001

Publisher: ProQuest Information and Learning Company

Publisher Address: 300 North Zeeb Road, PO Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

URL: http://historyonline.chadwyck.com

Price: Cost varies by institution, from $1100 to $3300 per year for site license, based on FTE (Academic) or Population (Public).

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Reviewer Affiliation: Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA

Last visited: February 2003

The Annual Register is one of the databases available through ProQuest's *History Online*, a portal providing access to collections of digital primary and secondary historical resources. *The Annual Register* online is the electronic edition of the print reference work by the same name. Formerly titled the *Annual Register of World Events* and first edited by Edmund Burke in 1758, *The Annual Register* provides a year-by-year worldwide record of principal political, religious, medical, legal, scientific and cultural events, as well as maps, tables and obituaries, written by primarily British scholars. The advantage of the online version over the print is the ability to search across all years and within the full text of all volumes (currently totaling over 145,000 pages) very quickly. The only things the printed volumes provide that the digital version does not are the two or three pages of photographs sometimes included in the frontispiece.

From the home page of the product, users can link to a table of contents (arranged by country and broad topics, exactly as the print publication) for a specified year, go to a specific year and page of the *Register*, or perform a keyword "quick search" within the index entries of any or all volumes. To search the full text of the *Register*, or perform Boolean, proximity, variant spellings, related meanings, or broader range of meanings searches, the "power search" form is available. Because the *Register* is a British publication, it is particularly useful to have the option to search variant spellings in order to find words such as labor and labour, nationalization and nationalisation. Overall, searching is straightforward, with phrase searching enabled with quotation marks and truncation with the asterisk. The help files, accessible via a link at the top of the search screen, are very detailed and should answer most if not all questions about the types of searches users can perform in order to get the best results. Users can save up to 50 searches by creating their own "archive" space, a nice option for researchers performing complex or frequent searches.

The list of search results is displayed in an easy to read format, with a hyperlink to the year relating to the entry and one to the main (table of contents) heading. The heading is the link to the page image/full text of the page on which the search terms appeared. The default for the list of results from full-text searches is according to relevance (based on frequency and placement of search terms) but this can be resorted easily. There are several options for viewing and printing the digital image, including viewing the PDF on the screen with a handy zoom button at the top, downloading the PDF for a high

quality image, and a “printer friendly” page with a lower quality PDF image for quick printing. These options make viewing and printing the digital images extremely easy to do, and all options except downloading large files take place very quickly, as long as Adobe Acrobat Reader is installed.

By giving users the ability to search across years and within full-text, *The Annual Register* online opens up many new avenues of research in areas such as history, political science, women’s studies and communication, to name a few. Current interest in “world” history, transnational exchanges and travel, and British perceptions of “other” cultures should make this primary source database very attractive to upper division undergraduates through researchers, especially in conjunction with some of the other *History Online* databases such as *Palmer’s Full Text Online*. A few suggestions for improvement include more introductory information about the purpose, structure and content of *The Annual Register*, a clear indication that the quick search is searching index entries only and not the full text of the volumes, and the addition of a “new search” option in addition to the “refine search” option currently provided.