

Library Research Guide for ENLT 2547: Black Writers in America

Camilla Ammirati ☞ Fall 2009

Getting help with your research

You can contact a reference librarian at any time for help with your research for this class, or any of your other classes:

Questions about English:

Christine Ruotolo

ruotolo@virginia.edu

434-982-2652

General Reference Questions :

IM Screen Name: UVALibRef

library@virginia.edu

434-984-3021

Searching for books and other Library materials

[VIRGO](#), the U.Va. Library's online catalog, lets you find library-owned books, as well as manuscripts and rare materials, CDs and DVDs, and many other types of resources. Use VIRGO to find books on your topic. The Details button will show you publication information about the book, and the A Look Inside tab will often provide a detailed table of contents.

Sample searches: **harriet jacobs** [author] *for all works written by the author*

'souls of black folk' [title] *for editions of the work*

'souls of black folk' [subject] *for books about Souls*

Truncation: **raci\$** *for racial, racially, racism, racist, etc.*

Booleans: **black or african american; frederick douglass and bibliography**

Finding basic information about an author or work

[Literature Resource Center](#) is a great place to begin research on a specific author. It includes full-text articles from the Dictionary of Literary Biography (a great source!) and other biographical and critical compilations about authors, along with reference articles & citations.

Sample search: Type **frederick douglass** in the Basic Search box, check the Person button directly underneath, and click Search. Click on the **Biographies** tab, and click the fourth result to view the 2001 Dictionary of Literary Biography article. Click on the tabs near the top of the screen to view the other results categories - reference articles and work overviews, bibliographies, citations from MLAIB, etc.

Finding scholarly journal articles

[MLA International Bibliography \(MLAIB\)](#) is the best resource for finding scholarly books and articles about literature in all languages. To get the full text of an article, click on "Find article @ UVa Libraries", or look up the journal title in VIRGO.

Sample search: In the MLAIB, search for **harriet jacobs** to get 198 citations. Type **frederick douglass** in the search box in the left column to find articles that mention both authors (29 total). Use the **Find This @ UVa Libraries** link to try to get the journal articles cited.

[Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature \[ABELL\]](#) indexes scholarly books and articles about English language and literature. Unlike the MLAIB, ABELL indexes reviews of scholarly books, which can help you determine if a particular book is relevant for your argument.

[Academic Search Complete](#) is a huge general database of scholarly and popular articles. This can also be a good place to look for scholarly articles. Most of the articles cited are available in full text.

[Project Muse](#) provides full-text searching of recent articles from major scholarly journals, including about 120 journals about literature. Not as comprehensive as MLAIB, but the full-text search will do a better job of picking up matches for very specific topics.

[JSTOR](#) contains back issues (usually five years old or older) of significant scholarly journals in many subjects, including language and literature. Like Project Muse, JSTOR is not as comprehensive as the MLAIB, but offers the advantages of full-text searching.

Finding historical newspaper and journal articles

[ProQuest Historical Newspapers](#): Use this database to find articles in major 19th and 20th century American newspapers. It contains full text of four US newspapers (NY Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Chicago Tribune), dating back to their initial date of publication.

[African-American Newspapers - 1827-1860](#): Includes seven African-American newspapers published between 1827 and 1860, including *The North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

Some reference books about Black literature and history

Blyden, Jackson. *A History of Afro-American Literature, Vol. 1: 1746-1895*. **PS153 .N5 J33 1989 v.1**. A history of African American literature up to 1895.

Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History. **E185 E54 1996 (Ref)**. A five-volume set, covering individuals, events, places, movements, sports, legal cases, and other important topics.

Ervin, Hazel. *Handbook of African American Literature*. **PS153.N5 E78 2004**. Explains literary terminology associated with African American writing.

Harley, Sharon. *Timetables of African-American History*. **E185 .H295 1995 (Ref)**. "A chronology of the most important people and events in African-American history."

Oxford Companion to African American Literature. **PS153 .N5 O96 1997 (Ref)**. Contains entries on writers, genres, literary works, characters, etc.

Helpful URLs

Ask a Librarian (phone, email, IM): <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/askalibrarian/>

English Subject Guide: <http://guides.lib.virginia.edu/english>

Using Databases Off Grounds: <http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/tools/offgrounds.html>

RefWorks (citation management software): <http://www.refworks.com>