



Using Chronicling America Podcast Series Transcript

NDNP Podcast 10: Overcoming Historical Vocabulary Differences
& Learning Alternatives to Controlled Vocabulary

Background

In collaboration with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress, the National Digital Newspaper Program in Ohio developed and produced a series of video podcasts that will help teach you how to access the rich content available on the historical newspaper database Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>).

About NDNP Podcast 10: Overcoming Historical Vocabulary Differences & Learning Alternatives to Controlled Vocabulary

Description	Wondering why your search terms aren't showing up in Chronicling America? View this podcast to learn about historical language barriers and using alternatives to controlled vocabulary so you can get the most out of your searches.
Hosts	Jenni Salamon
Duration	4:47
URL	http://www.ohiohistoryhost.org/ohiomemory/resources/tutorials

0:02	Sometimes the results that we're expecting or that we want don't show up. There are several reasons why this could happen. This podcast will focus on overcoming historical vocabulary differences and using alternatives to controlled vocabulary. This may sound confusing or complicated right now but trust me, if you stick with me, you'll understand everything by the end of this podcast.
0:22	First of all, let's talk about historical vocabulary differences. Words that we use to describe events, places and people of the past are not the words that were used in the past. This is similar to the way one generation might refer to something as "cool" and another generation might refer to the same thing as "rad." Since newspapers report on the news right after it happens, we sometimes need to think the same way that people thought back then.
0:48	For example, country and city names have changed over time and wars have changed over time. World War I wouldn't have been called World War I during the war because there wasn't a World War II yet. People would have called it the European War or the Great War.
1:02	Let's try an example.
1:06	If we do a search for <i>Thailand</i> , which is the current name of the country that we know as Thailand, let's look at the first page and see what happens.



1:16	We zoom in on the search term and we see that the words highlighted are not actually Thailand. It says <i>the land</i> .
1:23	So as you can see, doing a search for <i>Thailand</i> does not give us very many results and the results that it does give us are not very accurate.
1:31	So why don't we do a search for <i>Siam</i> . That is what people of the time period when these newspapers were published would have called the country that we know today as Thailand.
1:41	As you can see, we get many more pages of results. Let's pick this one and see if the words that are highlighted are actually the words that we searched for.
1:48	We'll zoom in on this top word here and as you'll see, it does say <i>Siam</i> and not some other word that isn't what we actually searched for. This shows you how historical vocabulary differences are really important to understand so that way you can find the results that you're looking for.
2:05	Understanding historical vocabulary differences will help you understand how to use a database that does not use controlled vocabulary.
2:13	So, what's controlled vocabulary? Often databases and library catalogs will have special terms assigned to things of the same topics. So that way if authors of those items use different words to talk about the same thing, you can still get to all of the right resources when you're doing searches in those catalogs. That is called controlled vocabulary.
2:33	For example, if you were looking for a book about Thailand in 1900, you would have called the country Siam. If you were looking for a book about Thailand that was written today, you would call the country Thailand.
2:45	If did a search for either Thailand or Siam in a system that uses controlled vocabulary, search results with books from 1900 and with books from today would show up.
2:56	In <i>Chronicling America</i> , since there isn't a controlled vocabulary, that's not going to happen. You have to find the word that fits the right time period.
3:05	So you cannot use one word or phrase to find information about the same topic if over the course of the time covered by <i>Chronicling America</i> the words describing that topic have changed, like the Siam and Thailand example that I used, or if different regions referred to the same events, people or places with different names.
3:22	For example, some Civil War battles have different names depending on whether you were in the South or the North.
3:29	The <i>Battle of Bull Run</i> in the North is known as the <i>Battle of Manassas</i> in the South.



3:34	To do a search and get information from all newspapers, you actually have to do a search for both terms and not just one. If Chronicling America had a controlled vocabulary, searching for one term would lead you to all relevant results.
3:50	One way to get around historical vocabulary differences or using a system that does not have controlled vocabulary is by using the Recommended Topics section on Chronicling America.
3:59	This is a link on the front page. We talked about it in the "Browsing" podcast. It will give you information about topics that were commonly covered in these historic newspapers. Each one of these will have Important Dates, Suggested Search Terms and Strategies and Sample Articles . Use these search strategies to teach yourself how to use Chronicling America. When you've run out of ideas for search terms, this might be a good way for you to learn how people of those times described those events, people or places.
4:30	I hope that after viewing this podcast, you have a better understanding of why your search results may not look the way you think they should.
4:37	For more information about how to get more out of your search, please see the "Understanding Keyword Searching Podcast."