

1. Logging In

- Set up an account in our [online catalog](#) - instructions are on the homepage.

2. Strategizing your Search

- Think about what you're looking for and efficient, generative strategies for finding it. It is always a good idea to start your research reading modern [reference books](#), [articles](#), and [bibliographies](#) about your topic to get an understanding of the historiography and available research about your topic. This helps you have a steady footing, so you are not trying to reinvent the wheel or recycle previous literature / ideas without proper citation.
- Good research starts with an understanding of the 18th, 19th, or early-20th century terms related to your topic - this will yield better results.
 - For instance, if you are searching for African American clothing in the 18th century, you would not simply search for "African American Clothing" - it more generative to search for specific garments, breeches, petticoats, etc, or types of fabrics common in that time period, wool, linen, etc.
- Online Exhibitions at LCP to utilize:
 - [Hearing Voices: Memoirs from the Margins of Mental Health](#), especially segments on race and class
 - [Imperfect History: Curating the Graphic Arts Collection at Benjamin Franklin's Public Library](#)
 - [Rewriting Representation: Success through the Struggle](#)
 - [Women Get Things Done: Women's Activism from 1860 - 1880](#)
 - [Déjà Vu: Race, Health, and Epidemics](#)
 - [Ghost River: The Fall and Rise of the Conestoga](#)
 - [From Negro Pasts to Afro-Futures: Black Creative Re-Imaginings](#)
 - [Fashioning Philadelphia: The Style of the City, 1720 - 1940](#)
 - [The Cassey and Dickerson Friendship Album Project](#)
 - [Genius of Freedom: Northern Black Activism and Uplift after the Civil War](#)
 - [The Liberation of Jane Johnson](#)
 - [In Disguise: Cross Dressing and Gender Identity](#)
 - [John A. McAllister's CIVIL WAR: The Philadelphia Homefront](#)
 - [The John A. McAllister Collection of Civil War Era Printed Ephemera, Graphics and Manuscripts](#)
 - [Black Founders: The Free Black Community in the Early Republic](#)

3. Continue to search the catalog & place holds on materials

- Take advantage of [advanced search](#) features.

- Use the drop down options to search by keyword, subject, title, call number, author, publisher, publisher location, and more.
 - Limit your search by item type, publication date, and language
- Use advanced tactics in the General Search Bar
 - Boolean operators: AND, OR, NOT
 - For example, you could search;
 - [abolitionist] OR [anti-slavery] AND [pamphlets]
 to retrieve all records having abolitionist or antislavery in them, together with the word pamphlets
 - Subject Terms: combine for specific searches
 - For example, you could search...
 - (su:"Abolitionists") AND (su:"United States") AND (su:"Biography.")
 To retrieve all records on abolitionist biography in the US
 - Towards the bottom of the advanced search page, you can find options to limit your search by item type, publication date, and language.

4. Interpreting Results

- Results
 - You may also choose to sort results by relevance, or ordered by author, call number, date, or title
 - Make lists to save searches or group common items together
- **Collection Types**
 - **Archives:** The Library Company's institutional archives date back to its founding in 1731 and document the history of the institution itself.
 - **Books:** The collections include approximately 500,000 rare printed volumes covering a vast range of subjects, along with tens of thousands of non-rare reference and "stack books."
 - **Broadsides:** Broadsides (or broadsheets) are single-sheet printed documents intended for public distribution or sale. These often include announcements, advertisements, political texts, speeches, and public notices.
 - **Manuscripts:** Use the finding aids to explore more than 1,000 linear feet of personal, family, business, and institutional records dating largely from the colonial period through the early 20th century.
 - **Newspapers:** The Library Company holds more than 500 newspaper series, including over 100 Pennsylvania newspapers spanning the 18th through 20th centuries. Many are accessible digitally through Readex.

Bibliographies such as African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography can help expand your search.

- **Playbills:** The playbill collection contains approximately 5,300 playbills dating from the 1770s through the 1880s, with the bulk from 1850–1868. While Philadelphia theaters predominate, the collection also includes materials from Baltimore, New York, and other regional theaters. Consult the Philadelphia Area Theatre Playbill List on Shelf 44 in the Reading Room.
- **Serials:** Explore thousands of serial publications, including magazines, journals, newspapers, and multi-volume works. Bibliographies can again help broaden your search.
- **Sheet Music:** The sheet music collection contains approximately 17,000 items dating from the 18th through early 20th centuries. Researchers interested in Black history topics should consult the Afro-American Subjects Song Sheets Binder in the Reading Room.
- **Maps:** The collections include hundreds of maps documenting both local and global geographies.
- **Visual Materials:** The graphic arts collections contain approximately 75,000 items, including prints, photographs, political cartoons, drawings, watercolors, and maps. Researchers may find the African American History Graphics Collection especially useful.
- **E-Text:** E-Text records provide access to digitized materials and may link directly to Readex or the Library Company's digital collections.

5. Place holds on any materials you'd like to see in the catalog.