

Andrews University

## Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Faculty Publications

---

4-2024

### British Online Archives

Katherine Van Arsdale

*Andrews University*, [vanarsdk@andrews.edu](mailto:vanarsdk@andrews.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Van Arsdale, Katherine, "British Online Archives" (2024). *Faculty Publications*. 5055.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/5055>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

**British Online Archives.** Access: <https://microform.digital/boa/>.

British Online Archives (BOA) provides subscription access to digitized primary source collections held by institutions across the United Kingdom and the world. An editorial board of international humanities and social sciences experts review which collections are added to the BOA. More than 120 collections are currently shared, and more are added regularly. Together, the BOA covers more than 1,000 years of world history.

The BOA site is straightforward. Tabs across the top of the homepage open dropdown menus that lead to primary source collections, licensing information, and media about BOA holdings. Collections are keyword searchable or may be browsed. Each collection's landing page provides rich historical context, previews of content, and access instructions. Subject-related groupings of collections, called "series," are curated by editors. One example, "World Wars, 1863–1974," combines 12 collections provided by eight archives and libraries, both public and private.

The BOA provides content-related articles, essays, blog posts, and more. These contextualizing documents are free to access without a subscription. The articles and essays include footnotes and list the author's credentials, making them a reliable source of scholarly information.

Users will encounter challenges to using the BOA. First, the keyword search function is difficult to use. This reviewer searched the term "religion" and received results that highlighted groupings of letters within the keyword. Adding quotation marks to the term returned zero results. This appears to be a bug or poor design, as "Philosophy and Religion" is a listed subject on seven collections.

Licensing provides the biggest usage hurdle. Individuals may purchase weekly or monthly licenses to some but not all collections. Each collection must be licensed individually, so a researcher interested in the World War series described above must purchase 12 licenses. Lastly, the BOA Terms of Service state that sharing a resource in the classroom is forbidden if accessed individually. Only institutional licenses allow for educational redistribution. Instructors whose institutions cannot afford large-scale subscriptions are out of luck. In an era of universal budget cuts, this requirement seems draconian.

This resource is first recommended to librarians who can acquire institutional licenses. Secondary recommendation goes to individual researchers for personal study. This resource is not recommended to anyone who lacks institutional access and has a desire to use primary sources in their teaching.—*Katharine Van Arsdale, Adventist Digital Library, vanarsdk@andrews.edu*

**Digital Transgender Archive.** Access: <https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/>.

The homepage of Digital Transgender Archive leads with the phrase "Trans History, Linked," an apt description of the extensive aggregated collection of documents, essays, media, and other materials from around the world. Although the target audience for the site may be researchers in transgender history and activism, it is also welcoming to users simply