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## Patrologia Latina

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ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

# Patrologia Latina

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Date of Review: December 13, 2010

Composite Score:

★★★★ 1/2

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## ABSTRACT

The Patrologia Latina Database offers 221 volumes of works written by the Latin Fathers. It is the extraordinary achievement of the nineteenth-century scholar and priest, Jacques-Paul Migne. It covers the works of the Latin Fathers from Tertullian around 200 A.D. to the death of Pope Innocent III in 1216 and contains the most influential works of late ancient and early medieval theology, philosophy, history, and literature. This review looks at the user interface and content details in this unique database offered by ProQuest.

## Pricing Options

The Patrologia Latina database is available as an annual subscription and/or a purchase. Pricing varies according to a number of factors, including the type of library, FTE or other population size, and other ProQuest database subscriptions or purchases. For an academic institution with an FTE of approximately 3,000 the subscription price would be approximately \$1,500. Consortium pricing is available.

## Product Description

Patrologia Latina Database offers 221 volumes of works written by the Latin Fathers in a fully-searchable electronic format.

The Patrologia Latina is the extraordinary achievement of the nineteenth-century scholar and priest, Jacques-Paul Migne. It covers the works of the Latin Fathers from Tertullian around 200 A.D. to the death of Pope Innocent III in 1216. It contains the most influential works of late ancient and early medieval theology, philosophy, history, and literature.

The Patrologia Latina Database is the full-text electronic version of the *Patrologia Latina*, including all prefatory material, original texts, critical apparatus, indexes, and illustrations. *The Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina (BHL)* reference numbers have been included in the Patrologia Latina Database. All Latin text is fully searchable and Unicode functionality allows full display of diacritics and Greek keyword searching.

Customers who subscribe to both the Patrologia Latina and the Acta Sanctorum databases are able to search across both databases at the same time, in a single search. The addition of BHL reference numbers to Patrologia Latina database enables direct comparison of textual passages between the two resources. The Patrologia database is invaluable for scholars in early European social history and the development of Christianity, from the foundation of the Church to the Reformation.

Free MARC records are available.

## Critical Evaluation

### SEARCH INTERFACE

The default search screen is clear and concise with five searching fields: Keyword, Greek Keyword (using Greek letters/alphabet); Title, Author (of the document), and Volume (of the Patrologia Cursus Completus). The Greek Keyword searching is compatible with Internet Explorer 5.0 or higher and Netscape 6.0 or higher. For each field, the searcher can either enter a term or click on Browse for a list of possible terms. The search interface is easy to navigate with options clearly indicated. For example, I did a keyword search for “Jerusalem.” The results screen indicated clearly how to return to the search screen and included options to begin a new search or refine the existing search.

### SEARCHING

The initial search screen makes it very clear which searching options are available. However, a searcher who is not familiar with the 221-volume *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, which comprises the Patrologia Latina database, will need to educate himself about what is actually being searched. For example, continuing with the “Jerusalem” keyword search, the results screen includes an author (not linked) and a linked text along with a list of linked “hits.” Since I am not familiar with the printed *Patrologia* set, I had to click on the linked text to understand that the database had searched for my term, “Jerusalem,” and had found it at least once in the document text that was listed, thus the list of hits. The results screen included not only the author and title of the text where my term had been found but also a context for where it was found. Clicking on the document title link from the results screen led me to the document itself, including a link at the top of the screen for “first hit.” I clicked on that link and was taken to “Jerusalem” in the text, marked by a red dot and arrow. All three instances of “Jerusalem” in the document were on the same screen, all clearly marked by a red dot and arrow, so I was able to view all of them easily.

However, I wondered how the searcher would proceed to the next instance of the term if it did not appear on the same screen as the first hit. To test this, I searched for the term “Procopius,” which resulted in several multihit documents. I clicked on the link for one of the hits then clicked on the link for First Hit. The system took me to the first hit marked with a red dot and arrow as it had when I had searched for “Jerusalem.” It was not immediately obvious to me how to go to the next hit, which was not visible on the screen. I tried to click on the red dot, which I discovered was not clickable. I then clicked on the arrow and discovered that it was not there to mark the hit next to it but, instead, to take me to the *next* hit in the document. The next hit



## Patrologia Latina Review Scores Composite: ★★★★★ 1/2

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

### Content: ★★★★★

The scholarly content included in the *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, which comprise the Patrologia Latina database, is vital for researchers in many fields. Taken together with the *Corpus Christianorum*, published by Brepols, which critically edits to modern standards many of the works and authors in *Patrologia*, the Patrologia Latina database is crucial to researchers of primary source church documents as well as to many other scholarly disciplines.

### Searchability: ★★★ 1/2

The search interface offers flexibility using five search options as well as additional limiting options. The search interface is clear and easy to navigate. It would be improved by the addition of definitions and explanations of the icons. For example, a searcher should be able to mouse over the arrows in the document to find the explanation that the arrows are navigational tools for going to the previous or next hit within the document. Currently the mouse over includes only "<-“ or “>-“. It should also indicate “previous hit” or “next hit” instead of, or in addition to, the symbols.

Terms that are understandable only to researchers familiar with the print set should be defined. For example, “apparatus” is not currently defined on the search screen (although it might be defined elsewhere). I suggest adding an explanation on the search screen to make it more obvious.

I also suggest that the vendor find a way to use the plural, “hits,” on the results screen when there are multiple hits. For example, in my search for the keyword “Procopius,” the first citation indicates “Found 3 hit.” It should be possible to use the plural when appropriate.

The Help system could be improved as detailed under critical evaluation, searching, above.

### Pricing Options: ★★★★★

For such an important scholarly database, the pricing is very reasonable. For example, my college has approximately 4,200 FTE. The library pays \$1,400 per year for Patrologia, including our consortium discount.

### Contract Options: ★★★★★

Overall, the licensing agreement is straightforward with standard permissions and restrictions covering, among other items: electronic reserves; Interlibrary Loan; scholarly sharing; and privacy. There is no governing law section (which we often have to change to Rhode Island or have removed) or indemnification clause (when included, our college counsel usually requires that we negotiate it out of the agreement).

marker had both forward and backward arrows as well as the red dot. It was then obvious to me that the arrows were navigation devices to go to the next or previous instance of the search term (hit) within the document.

Within each document are icons that look like paragraphs but with no indication as to what they denote. I clicked on one and was taken to a comments page. Linking the comments to a separate page makes sense from a researcher’s point of view, but the paragraph icon should be labeled. There are also icons that look like the paragraph icon but with a pen included. Those icons are linked to citations that must be different from comments, but the distinction was not clear to me. (Perhaps that distinction would be clear to a researcher who is familiar with *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*.) Again, icons should be labeled or at least defined in a more obvious way.

The searching mechanism for the other search options is very good. When I browsed for a Greek term, it was obvious how to select the term and add it to the searching page.

It is also possible to limit the search to Apparatus; All Authors, Medieval Authors, or Modern Authors; and to display search results With Context or With Summary of Matches. I am not familiar with the meaning of “apparatus” so I clicked on Help Contents on the left of the screen, then on Apparatus under Full Text, which led me to an explanation. However, the Help feature would be more useful if it were searchable. I should have been able to search for the term “apparatus” instead of having to find it on the screen. Or, perhaps better, there should be Help in context: when a user clicks on Help, it should go to the Help section for the term closest to where one clicked. For example, if I am unsure about what “apparatus” is, I should be able to click on Help when I’m in the drop-down menu that includes the term and immediately see an explanation.

### CONTENT

The database includes the 221-volume collection of *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, the writings of the Latin church fathers up to Innocent III. When it first became available on CD-ROM in

## Contact Information

### ProQuest

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the mid-1990s, it represented a leap forward for scholarly researchers of primary source church documents as well as other areas such as church history.

### VALUE TO LIBRARIES

Faculty will find the Patrologia Latina database to be invaluable in their research due, first, to its breadth of coverage. It includes works from around 200 A.D. to the death of Pope Innocent III in 1216. It covers most major and minor Latin authors and contains the most influential works of late ancient and early mediaeval theology, philosophy, history, and literature. Second, the database is cross-searchable with the Acta Sanctorum Database and Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina (BHL). The addition of BHL reference numbers to the Patrologia Latina database enables direct comparison of textual passages between the two resources. It features fully searchable Latin text plus Greek keyword searching and a full display of diacritics. Third, French and English translations for every entry of a Mediaeval Latin concept are included via the Brills Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minor. All entries are contextualized with relevant text passages. The CD-ROM version offers a choice of language interfaces including English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Free MARC records are available.

### Contract Provisions

The licensing agreement seems standard. Interlibrary Loan, detailed in a clause 5.e of the agreement, is allowed with reasonable restrictions, including the stipulation that the loan does not replace the re-

ipient library's own subscription to either the products or the underlying work. Electronic reserves, covered in a separate clause, 5.c, are permitted using durable links instead of PDFs. That is standard industry practice since it allows a hit to be recorded in the database. The inclusion of a clause allowing scholarly sharing is welcome in the age of Open Access. The agreement provides definitions for many terms.

### Authentication

Available on- and off-campus, by IP address range and/or username and password.

### References

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### About the Author

**Janice G. Schuster** is commons librarian for research, education and collections, associate professor, at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island, since 1991. Her primary responsibilities include providing research assistance to the Providence College community; managing the library's electronic resources; participating in the library's research education program; and serving as library liaison to four academic departments. She previously served as reference librarian (head of reference) at Stonehill College and as reference/circulation librarian at the University of South Carolina–Coastal Carolina College (currently Coastal Carolina University). She holds B.A. and M.L.S. degrees from Indiana University–Bloomington. ■