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America’s Historical Newspapers

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Pricing Options
Readex offers tiered pricing based on an institution’s mission and size. For example:

In 2010, before any applicable discounts, the price for Early American Newspapers, Series I, 1639–1876 ranges from about $9,913 for a four-year college with 1,000 FTE to about $90,846 for ARL-member institutions.

The price for Early American Newspapers, Series 7, 1773–1922, including a prepublication discount (before any other applicable discounts) ranges from about $9,161 for a four-year college with 1,000 FTE to about $86,480 for ARL-member institutions.

Discounts are available to institutions that hold the microform edition of Early American Newspapers, Series I, as well as to institutions that hold other Readex digital collections and/or acquire one or more individual collections at the same time.

Product Description
America’s Historical Newspapers features cover-to-cover reproductions of historic newspapers. The first series of this collection is based largely on Clarence Brigham’s History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690–1820 and offers an unprecedented look back into the extraordinary history of the United States—the story of its people, ideals, commerce, and everyday life. The core of the Readex collection is formed by Isaiah Thomas’s collection of colonial and early national period newspapers and supplemented by nearly two million issues added by Thomas’ successors at the American Antiquarian Society. Numerous other institutions and historical societies have contributed to the collection including the Boston Athenaeum, the Connecticut Historical Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Library of Congress, the libraries of universities such as Brown and Harvard, and private collections. The database consists of multiple parts including Early American Newspapers, Series 1 to 7, 1690–1922; Twentieth-Century American Newspapers, Series 1 to 3, 1923 and forward; and American Ethnic Newspapers, currently including African American Newspapers, 1827–1998, and Hispanic American Newspapers, 1808–1980. This review concentrates on Early American Newspapers, Series 1 through 7, 1690–1922.

Critical Evaluation
Search Interface  The top of the initial search screen defaults to a search box with a drop-down menu of options. Links to add or remove search fields are prominent. Tabs below the search screen give limiting options: Dates and Eras, Article Types, Languages, Places of Publication, and Newspaper Titles. It was very easy to navigate among all of the different options. The search interface also makes it very easy to move around the various searching pages. For example, the link to return to the searching screen after one goes to My Collection, etc., is obvious.

Searching  The initial search screen makes it very clear which searching options are available. One can immediately start searching using the Google-like search box and the drop-down menu of searching options, including Headline, Standard Title (i.e., publication title), and Title as published. Moving from basic to advanced searching (though the interface does not label the search options as such) is easy.

Results  I searched for “U.S. constitution” in full text, which retrieved over 168,000 items. Limiting the search to the headline field in the dropdown menu narrowed the results down to approximately 1,700 items.

The results list includes a wealth of information for each item, including title of publication; publication date; published as; location; headline, and article type. It appears that if the headline information on the results list is in brackets, then the information was added by the vendor even though it is not actually included in the headline. If there are no brackets, the words appear in the article’s headline. Adding this type of metadata enhances the database’s usability for researchers.

The yellow highlighting of the search term is a very useful feature and makes it obvious where the term appears on the page image; otherwise it might be difficult to determine why an article was retrieved. The results list also includes a thumbnail image (actually larger than a thumbnail) of a portion of the article. This facilitates research by making it easy to browse through and eliminate irrelevant items. There are three ways to order the results list: chronological (oldest to newest); reverse chronological (newest to oldest); and best matches first.

The results list includes a box to Add to My Collection, but the information about the item that appears on the default My Collection screen is very brief, giving only the publication date, headline (if any), and keyword entered. The full information is available by clicking on the publication title link (or on No Headline), but I would prefer that the information appear on the initial My Collection screen. E-mailing an article from the My Collection screen worked seamlessly, but users might need to be careful about the e-mailed article ending up in a spam filter. I don’t see a way to keep items in My Collection for future use (as is possible with EBSCO’s My EBSCO), which might be a problem for a researcher doing ongoing work. I suggest that Newsbank implement a method for saving items.

In addition to the Basic and Advanced searches available at the top of the main search screen, there are tabs on that screen to limit the search. I find this tab system to be user-friendly and intuitive. I tried a search for “John Adams” in the headline field and used the Article
Changes, etc. The fact that all titles are full-image enhances the use of the database for research.

**MARc Records**
Readex supplies newspaper title data to Serials Solutions, ExLibris SFX, TDNet, EBSCO, and Openly Informatics (part of OCLC). Readex did not define what is included in “newspaper title data,” but I assume it includes at least ISSN and holdings information. Our library has purchased Early American Newspapers series 1, 2, 6, and 7; we selected those databases in our Serials Solutions Client Center and will receive MARC records for our OPAC (Innovative) during the next load. (I am grateful to the knowledge management librarian of our HELIN (Higher Education Library Information Network) consortium, Martha Rice Sanders, for helping me understand this process).

**Contract Options:**
Newsbank is open to changes in the licensing agreement. For example, a few months ago, Newsbank readily agreed to my institution’s request to add an ILL clause to the licensing agreement. All of the Newsbank staff involved were diligent in listening to our request and following up, and the entire process of amending the agreement took only a few weeks.

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**Contact Information**

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**About the Author**

Janice G. Schuster is the coordinator of research services and research librarian, associate professor, at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island, since 1991. Her primary responsibilities include research, managing the library’s electronic resources, overseeing development of the reference collection, library instruction, 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.