



19th Century Masterfile: 1106-1930

Studies in Historical Research

"I knew how valuable NCM would be to professors in a variety of disciplines. I guess you could say that's what turned my interest into a rabid desire to acquire this unparalleled resource for our libraries."

Lauren Cristos
Associate Librarian
for Instruction,
Reference and
Research



Name of Library: University Libraries

Name of College: Florida International University

Location: Miami, Florida

Population Served: 38,000 students, 1000 full-time faculty.

Paratext Product: *19th Century Masterfile: 1106-1930*

About Florida International University

Florida International University (FIU) is Miami-Dade County's first public, four year university. FIU was founded in 1965 and opened for classes in 1972 with 5,667 students - the largest opening day enrollment in U.S. collegiate history. Today, with more than 38,000 students, FIU is one of the twenty-five largest universities in the nation, based on enrollment. The University offers more than 200 bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs in twenty-one colleges and schools.

FIU has two campuses, the 344-acre University Park campus in western Miami-Dade County and the 200-acre Biscayne Bay Campus in northeast Miami-Dade County. The University Libraries are housed in the Steven and Dorothea Green Library at University Park and in the Library Building at the Biscayne Bay Campus.

Reference Challenge

According to Lauren Christos, Associate Librarian for Instruction, Reference and Research, the initial request for *19th Century Masterfile (NCM)* came from an English professor. Acting in support of the faculty, Lauren requested the library purchase this index to material published pre-1925. In a tight budget situation, Lauren needed to get creative to win support and approval.

"I graduated from this university with a degree in literature," Lauren said. "I knew the faculty. Because it wasn't just subject-specific, I knew how valuable NCM would be to professors in a variety of disciplines."

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Evaluating 19th Century Masterfile

To support her purchase request, Lauren undertook a trial of NCM and solicited support from faculty. She also did a side-by-side comparison with another index and found NCM's coverage to be more extensive. "NCM covered twenty-one more years than the other index, its overall coverage was broader and the only overlap between the two products was Poole's Index to Periodical Literature 1802-1906 and Palmer's Index to the Times." Lauren found NCM to be more comprehensive, pointing scholars to more than general literature including specialized literature in medicine, science, technology, law and religion.

Other factors that were important to Lauren included NCM's Z39.50 and Open URL compliance. With Z39.50, NCM could be searched along with other FIU resources using a federated search engine and Open URL capabilities meant there would be a content link whenever full text material was available.

Overall, Lauren's evaluation showed that NCM was the recommended resource to meet the teaching and research needs of faculty, undergraduate and graduate students.

Faculty Support Makes the Difference

Lauren's strategy of seeking faculty support convinced the library acquisitions team that NCM was an essential resource for a university of FIU's stature. Testimonials like these were hard to ignore!

“The 19th Century Masterfile database...is the most comprehensive index to 19th century English and American periodicals, and is an essential research tool for research faculty and graduate students working in the areas of 19th century English and American history and literature.”

**FIU Director of
European Studies**

“Not to have resources like NCM puts our faculty at some risk of overlooking an important piece of research in their field.”

Lauren Cristos

“I think it is an extraordinary database for developing bibliographies on 19th century subjects, writers –the essential first step in any research project, whether by faculty or student.”

**FIU English
Professor**

“This is a terrific resource that would be useful to undergraduate students as well as to faculty.” – Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

“This could have been, for example, an essential resource for the senior seminar I taught last spring...on gender and sexuality, where students were required to write research papers based on a series of primary sources – newspapers and journals prominent among them.” – History Professor

“I think it is an extraordinary database for developing bibliographies on 19th century subjects, writers – the essential first step in any research project, whether by faculty or student.” – English Professor

“I consider *Masterfile* to be an essential component in teaching and research for students. The wealth of information here is invaluable, an asset to the collection.” – Associate Professor, Art History

“The 19th Century Masterfile database... is the most comprehensive index to 19th century English and American periodicals, and is an essential research tool for research faculty and graduate students working in the areas of 19th century English and American history and literature.” – Director of European Studies

The real turning point, said Lauren, was showing NCM to the Dean of the Law School. The Dean researched NCM and found that all the premier law schools around the country were subscribers. “That was it,” said Lauren. “From that point on, the Law Dean was a solid supporter of our acquiring NCM for FIU. Any university that has a law school should capitalize on the valuable information in NCM related to law and not just limit it to the humanities disciplines.”

Why Libraries Need 19th Century Masterfile

According to Lauren Christos, it’s hard to image any research library adequately serving its faculty and students without NCM because of the coverage it offers.

■ **NCM covers a strategic era of history from multiple perspectives.** “NCM covers not just history, literature and culture – it also covers medicine, law, languages and more. The database covers many subjects over a span of time.”

■ **NCM is comprehensive in coverage.** NCM goes beyond the long 19th century (1789-1914) to include coverage to 1925 and is applicable to cross-disciplinary research.

■ **Faculty needs access to everything in their field.** “When we looked at the institutions that already had NCM, it was frankly embarrassing that we didn’t. FIU is proud of our reputation and to maintain that reputation our faculty must have access to the best resources available. When faculty members go up for tenure, they need complete information for their research and access to everything valuable in their field. With NCM, we are fulfilling the library’s mission to ‘support the University’s mission of teaching, research, and service by providing the means for the discovery and the pursuit of knowledge.’ Not to have resources like NCM puts our faculty at some risk of overlooking an important piece of research in their field.”

Lauren Christos says the process of garnering support from colleagues and faculty to purchase NCM was a learning experience, and one she willingly shares with others. “My advice?” she said. “Get other librarians to see the database and actively solicit their feedback. And, above all, communicate with faculty so they understand the value NCM will bring to their own research and to their students.”

