

Library Resources for Researching Local Historians

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Local history research often means pulling together a variety of resources – books, oral histories, newspapers, archival documents and more – to piece together a story. Many wonderful resources are at your fingertips, but knowing where to locate information may take some digging.

Ohio is fortunate to have some of the best libraries in the country. Not only do these buildings house traditional print resources, but most libraries subscribe to online resources that can aid your quest for information. Many also offer access to local historical materials not found elsewhere. To locate a public library in a particular area of the state, visit the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN) [Find-A-Library](#) service. You can search by city name or click the county you need to find a listing of public libraries. Link directly to library websites to view hours, services, departments and contact information. Looking for academic and organizational libraries, too? Visit OCLC's [WorldCat libraries](#) to find other repositories near you.

One important service libraries offer researchers is access to online databases. Did you know that all Ohio public libraries offer free onsite access to Ancestry Library? This database is a genealogist's best friend, but it can also be a boon for local historians. Access census information, vital records, city directories, military information, local history books, and more without purchasing a subscription. Ancestry Library (for in-library use) is made available through the [Ohio Web Library](#), which brings together resources provided through OPLIN, as well as other organizations throughout the state. Access [Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps](#), link to the [Ohio History Central](#) online encyclopedia, or connect to the [Ohio Obituary Index](#) to locate death notices and other information from over 60 partner libraries. View the databases your local library

subscribes to by clicking the “Locally purchased by your library” link from the Ohio Web Library [resources page](#).

Historic newspaper content is available through a number of sources. In addition to any newspaper databases your local library might subscribe to, Ohio Memory's [Digital Newspaper Portal](#) offers access to publications from communities across the state. Browse newspaper holdings by title or region, and link to digital copies available through [Ohio Memory](#) and Library of Congress' [Chronicling America](#) project. (Note: With few exceptions, content published 1923 and later is not available because of copyright restrictions.) In some cases, locating historic newspapers means tracking down microfilm at a public or academic library. Search a catalog like [WorldCat.org](#) to locate copies of a particular publication when digital versions are not available.

Local history research benefits from the fact that most print resources published in the United States before 1923 fall into the public domain. In addition to works digitized by public and academic libraries, local history books and other publications are increasingly available for free on sites like [Google Books](#), [Internet Archive](#) and [HathiTrust](#).

Although local history researchers enjoy ready access to countless resources online, some research still demands going to the source, especially when it comes to archival collections. Two of the challenges with one-of-a-kind resources are, first, knowing that they exist, and second, knowing where to find them. OhioLINK's [EAD Finding Aid Repository](#) brings archival collections from participating institutions throughout the state together in one searchable database. Search across all collections to view repositories that hold items of interest to your research, or browse the collections of a particular institution. Similarly, [ArchiveGrid](#) can help



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locate archival collections across the state and beyond. If your organization holds collections of potential interest, consider sharing your finding aids or collection information in this way to help direct researchers to your organization's holdings.

Researching local history means hunting down a variety of resources, not all of which can be discussed here. Look to the many digital resources available, and take advantage of the wealth of resources available at libraries and institutions throughout the state. ■